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THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION
" "
IN THE THOUGHT OF
PAUL TILLICH

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
Buford Allen Dickinson
"
June 1967

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. CRISIS IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

That the Christian Church is having difficulty getting its message across to contemporary man is obvious to all. The communication of the Gospel has never been an easy task, but in this age of accelerated change resistance to the Christian message has intensified. Modern man's interest in religion is declining and the institutional church has been pushed to the periphery of his life. Church officials face this situation with frustration and intense anxiety concerning the future. Declining interest in the total Christian education program of the Methodist Church is reflected in sagging Sunday school statistics. From a peak in 1960 of 3,713,675, attendance fell to 3,623,471 in 1965. All indications point to continued decline in 1966.¹ In Arizona and Southern California, where the general population is rapidly increasing, total membership in the Methodist Church declined 1,444 during the year which

¹"Christian Education: Search for Comeback Strategy," Christian Advocate XII:2 (January 26, 1967), 3.

ended May 31, 1966.² It is evident that within and outside the church there is a growing skepticism about the usefulness of what the church teaches.

It is apparent that today there is a crisis in Christian communication. Ministers experience frustration as they seek to express the Christian message in relevant and meaningful forms, and laymen are becoming increasingly aware of the distance between the pulpit and the pew. Dr. L. K. Bishop reports on a suburban churchman who expressed his bewilderment in this way:

I've been unable to understand the language ministers use for so long that I no longer can look to professional clergymen for guidance in my faith. Why are ministers so obscure? Why can't they phrase things so laymen can understand?³

In the same article, Dr. Bishop reveals the results of a survey reported in The Harvard Business Review. Seventeen hundred executives were asked to tell what guidance they had received from the church and clergymen in regard to ethical problems and making ethical decisions.⁴ Four out of five of those who answered expressed dissatisfaction with assistance received from the clergy. Of those who

²Taken from an address by K. Morgan Edwards, "Rethinking Evangelism" (Summer 1966), p. 1.

³L. K. Bishop, "The Pit Between the Pulpit and the Pew," in Stephen C. Rose (ed.), Who's Killing the Church? (Chicago: Chicago City Missionary Society, 1966), p. 24.

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

responded to the survey, thirty-five percent indicated that they had received no help, and only sixteen percent reported that the church had given assistance in helping to resolve ethical problems.

In one of his sermons Dr. Paul Tillich refers to an intellectual leader who said, "I hope for the day when everyone can speak again of God without embarrassment."⁵ The future cannot be predicted, but in the present moment the church makes its witness with a certain hesitation and timidity. The traditional ways of communicating the Gospel are proving to be inadequate and there is uncertainty about the form the Christian witness should take in the future. The secular age has arrived and is engulfing every institution, including the church. Commenting on the secular age, Dr. Samuel H. Miller writes:

On all sides it proclaims itself frankly, proudly, even a bit boisterously. The state has unshackled itself from the dominance of religion; science has long since liberated itself violently from any concerns of faith (or even morals!); art fears the debilitating touch of the church as the very touch of death; industry goes its merry way of marketing, advertising, manufacturing, without regard to religious scruples, hoping only not to offend at too great a cost. None of the basic concerns of man's spirit any longer carry more than a most attenuated relationship to religion. The world operates very well in most areas without paying any attention at all to religion. In fact, faith has been put into

⁵ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 93.

a pocket, to which the world may revert at odd times when and if it pleases. It is no longer a consistent or pervasive element in our life.⁶

This is the kind of world in which the church is called to bear witness to its faith. A cultural and social revolution is taking place and no one is fully aware of the radicalness of change. Dietrich Bonhoeffer stressed that the world has come of age and that man has achieved a new level of maturity. The expanding secularization of the world does not necessarily mean that the world is becoming less Christian. Bonhoeffer encourages us to recognize that reality cannot be divided into a sacred and a profane sphere, a Christian and a secular sphere. In his view, it is impossible to think of God or Christ without the world. Bonhoeffer writes:

There are not two spheres, but only one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and of the world, which has been accomplished in Christ, is repeated, or more exactly, is realized, ever afresh in the life of men.⁷

The secular realm is the spiritual realm, and in relation to reality as a whole the church is compelled to find new wineskins for the transmission of the message by which it lives.

⁶ Samuel H. Miller, The Dilemma of Modern Belief (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 5.

⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

II. PURPOSE OF DISSERTATION AND METHOD OF STUDY

Against the background of radical social change, it is the purpose of this dissertation to summarize some of Paul Tillich's concepts regarding communication and to examine the implications of these concepts for a ministry of communication. In pursuing this study, an attempt was made to trace Tillich's thoughts on communication in his own publications and in the writings of other authors where Tillich was the subject.

Since the whole of Tillich's systematic theology employs his theological method, which is called the principle or method of correlation, part of the Introductory Chapter will be devoted to a summary and analysis of this method. Chapter II will focus on the meaning and function of language in Paul Tillich's thought. The content of Chapter III will deal with Tillich's concept of symbolism as the language of faith. Communication through the arts will be given special emphasis in the fourth Chapter. This will be seen in the context of Tillich's concept that culture is the form of religion and religion is the substance of culture. The material in Chapter V will deal specifically with the communication of the Christian message. An attempt will be made to point toward a ministry of communication, using Tillich's concepts of communication as a model.

III. TILlich'S THEOLOGICAL METHOD

Walter M. Horton once stated that a person's theological position could be determined if you got him to say what he thought of Karl Barth's theology. Without implying that Barthian theology is out of date, Professor Yasuo Carl Furuya points out that in the present one's theological identity could more accurately be determined if you knew his attitude toward Paul Tillich. He emphasizes that "no theologian, particularly no systematic theologian in the United States today can speak without saying something about Tillich."⁸

It is obvious that if one speaks intelligently about Tillich, he must have an understanding of Tillich's theological method. Tillich refers to his method as the method of correlation, and this method is employed in all sections of his theological system in the discussion of theological problems. In the Preface to his first volume of Systematic Theology, Tillich states that his purpose is "to present the method and the structure of a theological system written from an apologetic point of view and carried through in a continuous correlation with philosophy."⁹ The pattern for Tillich's theological system is

⁸Yasuo Carl Furuya, "Apologetic or Kerygmatic Theology?," Theology Today, XVI:4 (January 1960), 471.

⁹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, vii.

set when he indicates that a theological system serves two basic needs:

. . . the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation. Theology moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received.¹⁰

Because Tillich has taken the stance of utilizing the insights and terminology of culture in the communication of Christian truth, he is described as having a unique position among major theologians as a theologian of synthesis.¹¹ Tillich himself has written:

. . . the task of theology is mediation, mediation between the eternal criterion of truth as it is manifest in the picture of Jesus as the Christ and the changing experiences of individuals and groups, their varying questions and their categories of perceiving reality. If the mediating task of theology is rejected, theology itself is rejected; for the term 'theo-logy' implies, as such, a mediation, namely, between the mystery, which is theos, and the understanding, which is logos.¹²

It is Tillich's passion to combine kerygmatic theology, which stresses the unchangeable truth of the Christian message, and apologetic theology, which is an "answering

¹⁰Ibid., I, 3.

¹¹Robert Clyde Johnson, "A Theologian of Synthesis," Theology Today, XV:1 (April 1958), 36.

¹²Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. ix.

theology," speaking to the situation of man and the throbbing problems of existence.¹³

George F. Thomas has made the observation that Tillich's method is intelligible "only if the apologetic point of view is always borne in mind."¹⁴ Continuing his analysis, Thomas says:

There can be no doubt that, while his systematic theology combines apologetic and kerygmatic elements, Tillich is primarily an apologetic theologian. As Barth is probably the greatest living representative of kerygmatic theology, Tillich is probably the outstanding representative of apologetic theology at the present time.¹⁵

This is not to suggest, however, that Tillich disregards or neglects kerygmatic theology. He has a strong feeling that apologetic theology must be based on the kerygma if it is to retain its special Christian character. By combining apologetic and kerygmatic theology, Tillich, in his own thinking, has found a way to prevent the Christian message from becoming narrow and irrelevant. Tillich's method of correlation is a way of uniting message and situation.

It tries to correlate the questions implied in the situation with the answers implied in the message.

¹³Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 6.

¹⁴George F. Thomas, "The Method and Structure of Tillich's Theology," in Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (eds.), The Theology of Paul Tillich (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 86.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 87.

It does not derive the answers from the questions as a self-defying apologetic theology does. Nor does it elaborate answers without relating them to the questions as a self-defying kerygmatic theology does. It correlates questions and answers, situation and message, human existence and divine manifestation.¹⁶

Employing the principle of correlation, systematic theology works in this way: ". . . it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions."¹⁷

Professor John Cobb points out that by the "situation,"

Tillich does not refer to the given psychological and sociological conditions. He refers to the interpretation of those conditions or the expression of what human existence is understood to be in those conditions. It is this interpretation which poses the existential questions to which theology, if it is to be relevant, must give its answer.¹⁸

One would not want to assume from this discussion that Tillich's theological method is beyond ambiguity. Tillich himself confesses the possibility of distortion:

The method of correlation is not safe from distortion; no theological system is. The answer can prejudice the question to such a degree that the seriousness of the existential predicament is lost. Or the question can prejudice the answer to such a degree

¹⁶Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 8.

¹⁷Ibid., I, 62.

¹⁸John B. Cobb, Jr., Living Options in Protestant Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 260.

that the revelatory character of the answer is lost. No method is a guaranty against such failures. Theology, like all enterprises of the human mind, is ambiguous.¹⁹

Theologians and philosophers have been quick to point out some of the distortions in the method of correlation. George F. Thomas says that in the existentialist approach to theology "there is a danger that theology will become anthropocentric."²⁰ His concern is that an obsession with analyzing the human situation will blind one to God's glory and honor. Thomas raises the question, "Under the influence of existentialism and its preoccupation with man, are we to forget that 'man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever?'"

Harvey Cox calls Tillich's theological method into question when he writes that modern secular man is pragmatic and has very little, if any, interest in religious questions.²¹ Cox maintains that Tillich's approach has no relevance for pragmatic man. He rejects Tillich's assumption that it is part of man's nature to ask "ultimate" questions. In The Secular City Cox writes:

Secular man relies on himself and his colleagues for answers. He does not ask the church, the priest,

¹⁹Tillich, Systematic Theology, II, 16.

²⁰Kegley, op. cit., p. 89.

²¹Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 79.

or God. This is not because he has no respect for religion. He is probably not an anticleric. He simply feels that the issues he is concerned with relate to a different field. Like all contemporaries, he is a specialist, usually scrupulously tolerant of those with a different specialty. So it is pointless and unfair to try to force secular man into asking religious questions, consciously or otherwise, before we can converse. We begin by accepting pragmatic man as he is, and this means we must part company with Tillich.²²

Whether Cox's charge against Tillich is valid is a debatable issue, but it does lead to serious thought about the stance of secular man and how the Christian message can be communicated to him.

In spite of the objections to Tillich's existential theology, it provides a model for the task of communicating the Christian message in this modern age. Consciously or unconsciously, Tillich's theological method is a stimulus for much of the ferment going on in theological education today. Dr. Allen J. Moore has summarized this trend in speaking of his own particular discipline within a theological faculty:

In my desire to arrive at a deeper understanding of human existence in an urban socio-cultural context, I will utilize the best insights available to me from the social sciences. But I also realize that the social sciences cannot exhaust all the meaning that is inherent in the human situation. I must bring to that situation theological questions in order that theological answers might arise out of the meeting of Christian tradition with the human situation. As a theologian, I have chosen the social sciences as a resource

²²Ibid., p. 81.

for theological building. Not unlike the historical theologian who begins with a historical event, I begin with the events of the present in order to have a clarified understanding of the man-God relation. Gibson Winter has suggested that the biblical and systematic theologians reflect theologically on God before man while the social or empirical theologian reflects theologically on man before God. Or as Peter Berger has concluded regarding Bonhoeffer, it is the work of discerning the presence of Christ in the empirical, historical, and social reality of the world.²³

Colin W. Williams strengthens this approach when he insists that

A Christian theology, to be Christian, must be a reflection on what God is doing. The 'past' character of Christian theology because of the fact that it is rooted in God's deeds and words, often misleads us into assuming that we can formulate theology in such a way that it will be just as 'true' 100 years from now as it will be today. To think this way is to forget that the 'past' revelation speaks to us of a living God who is continuously at work in history and calls us to respond to his work in the world. It is for this reason that we must resist the common tendency to separate theology from worldly disciplines such as sociology and psychology. Just as we must reject the tendency to treat Church and world as though they were separate entities, so we must reject the separation of the theological task from the sociological. It is within this world that the theological task must be carried on.²⁴

In most of his works, Tillich has attempted to show that the Christian message provides the answers to the questions implied in human existence. In his theological

²³Allen J. Moore, Jr., "Renewal as Theology and Reflection," (a paper read to the faculty of the School of Theology at Claremont, California, October 18, 1965).

²⁴Colin W. Williams, Where in the World? (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., 1963), pp. 33-34.

method, the message and the situation are united in such a way that neither of them is destroyed. The importance of this principle will be evident as consideration is given to those segments of Tillich's thought which have to do with communication.

CHAPTER II

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGUAGE

Amos N. Wilder, in The Language of the Gospel, an important study of the speech-forms and utterances of the early Christian Church, calls our attention to the significance of language:

Men of our time have inevitably had their attention called to the problem of language, and in various aspects. As modern devices make the world smaller and smaller, and throw us ever closer to peoples we had thought of as alien and remote, we find ourselves under the necessity of mastering more foreign tongues. But it is not only a matter of diverse languages. We are now more conscious of the problem of communication itself even in our own language. Familiar words have lost their meaning for many; or the same word means different things to different people. Jargon and cliches usurp the place of discriminating speech in many areas of life. It is not only in the modern arts that we wrestle with the problem of meaning. It is not surprising that philosophy is today occupied above all with language, or that social science interests itself in the rhetoric of propaganda, or the Church with the task of communication.¹

The problem of communication inevitably involves the problem of language. It is therefore essential to look at the meaning Tillich attaches to language as we consider his concepts of communication. Tillich asserts that

Using words, having language, is a basic function of the human mind. Without exaggeration it can be

¹Amos N. Wilder, The Language of the Gospel (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 9.

said that language makes man man. With his language are given his reason and his freedom. Through the word man grasps the structures of reality; through the word he expresses and communicates the depths of his personality. The word makes community between men possible, and it is only in community that man creates the word and becomes a man - a rational and free personality.²

II. THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE

One of Tillich's most definitive statements regarding language is found in his Systematic Theology under the section "The Self-creativity of Life and Its Ambiguities."³ There language is seen as one of the basic functions of culture and is related to technology. Culture is defined as "that which takes care of something, keeps it alive and makes it grow." As man encounters an object there is not only a process of cultivating the object, but in the encounter something new is created. In terms of man's cultural activity, language and technology are created. To show that language and technology go together, Tillich points to the incidents in Genesis where man is requested by God to provide names for the animals (language) and to

²Paul Tillich, "The Word of God," in Ruth Nanda Anshen (ed.), Language: An Enquiry into Its Meaning and Function (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 122.

³Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), III, 57-62.

prepare a garden (technology). The spoken word and the use of tools go hand in hand.

Tillich has indicated in more than one place that "religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses itself."⁴ Put in abbreviated form, the statement would read "religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion." The validity of the assertion that every religious act is culturally formed is seen in the fact that "all functions of man's spiritual life are based on man's power to speak vocally or silently."

One of the essentials in man's freedom is that he has language. Language gives to man universals which set him free from the given or concrete situation.⁵ This is one of the characteristics which distinguishes man from even the highest animals. Language gives to man the power to transcend the given situation and create new worlds of meaning.

⁴Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 201.

⁵Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, 31.

III. THE FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE

Tillich points out that human words have their basis in the encounter of mind with reality. Words serve as a means of communication. There are two ways in which the word communicates the experience of one ego-self to another ego-self—namely, by expression and denotation. "The denotative power of language is its ability to grasp and communicate general meanings. The expressive power of language is its ability to disclose and to communicate personal states."⁶ An algebraic equation would be an example of the denotative character of language, while a spontaneous outcry would be representative of the expressive character. Denotation and expression represent two poles, and most speaking moves between the two. Communication of a scientific and technical nature is closely identified with the denotative pole, while communication of a poetic and communal nature will be found nearer the expressive pole.

Tillich says that language communicates and denotes.⁷ Non-denotative means of communication such as sounds and gestures give communicative power to language, but the denotative character of language must be present

⁶Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 123.

⁷Ibid., III, 58.

for communication to reach fulfillment. "In language," says Tillich, "communication becomes mutual participation in a universe of meanings. Man has the power of such communication because he has a world in correlation to a completely developed self. Man has language because he has a world, and he has a world because he has language."⁸ By world, Tillich means the structural whole which includes and transcends all environments. "World is a structure or a unity of manifoldness."⁹ One of the characteristics of being human is that man is never completely boxed-in by an environment. He moves beyond environment by grasping and shaping it according to universal norms and ideas. However limited a man's environment may be, he has a world. "Language, as the power of universals, is the basic expression of man's transcending his environment, of having a world. The ego-self is that self which can speak and which by speaking trespasses the boundaries of any given situation."¹⁰

In analyzing culture Tillich gives a prominent place to language because he feels that language is fundamental for all cultural functions. Through language the basic characteristics of and differences between man's cultural activities are revealed. In this context Tillich sees the possibility of semantics "becoming a door to life

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., I, 170.

¹⁰Ibid., I, 170-171.

in the dimension of the spirit." Tillich draws some important distinctions between different kinds of language; for instance, the difference between language that expresses the technical encounter with reality and religious language. Religious language is symbolic-mythological, and the failure to distinguish it from the language that expresses the ordinary encounter with reality leads to confusion in the understanding of religion. "Human language is used for expression and communication, for literature and poetry and also for the expression and communication of our ultimate concern."¹¹ However, it is important to see that in each case the language is different. Tillich points out that religious language is ordinary language, changed under the power of what it expresses, the ultimate of being and meaning. Language in itself is not holy, but if it becomes an expression of one's ultimate concern it takes on a quality of holiness.

IV. THE WORD OF GOD

Language is the fundamental expression of man's spirit and, as such, can become a medium of the Spritual Presence. The thing that qualifies human words as the "Word of God" is that they become vehicles of the

¹¹Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 47.

Spiritual Presence with the power to lay hold on the human spirit. Tillich states that "no word is the Word of God unless it is the Word of God for someone."¹² A word can become the Word of God if it seizes the human mind with such power and force that an ultimate concern is brought into being. Looked at from this perspective, an ordinary conversation is potentially a medium of the Spirit. It must be noted, however, that the biblical words are the criterion regarding what human words can become the Word of God. Any words that might be contradictory to the New Being as revealed in Jesus as the Christ cannot become the Word of God. Tillich says that "the Word of God as the word of revelation is transparent language. Something shines (more precisely, sounds) through ordinary language which is the self-manifestation of the depth of being and meaning."¹³

Further consideration must be given to the term "Word of God." Tillich says that this term should always be set in quotation marks to guard against distortion, to discourage the false assumption that God has a language of his own and that the holy writings of religion have been dictated by God. The "Word of God" has symbolic power and

¹²Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 125.

¹³Ibid., I, 124.

points to the divine self-manifestation and the reception of this manifestation by men.

God manifests himself in ecstatic experiences, and those who have these experiences express them in words which point to the divine self-manifestation. These words, and the divine self-manifestation which they express, are the "Word of God."¹⁴

God speaks to men in their own language and men use the word given to them to understand and communicate God's manifestations.

Tillich indicates that the term "Word of God" "is used in Biblical literature for the preaching of the Christian message and for every word and event which can become 'Word of God' for someone in a special situation."¹⁵ The "Word of God" is not to be identified with Scripture for, as Tillich points out,

The Biblical words are human words, created by the development of languages under many different influences. The Biblical language is neither a divine language nor a divinely dictated human language. The Biblical language is the human expression of the state of revelatory ecstasy which the Biblical writers have experienced. They express their experience in a human way, each in his own language.

.....

God speaks through human words in the books of the Bible. But these words are at the same time "Word of God" in so far as they are received by men as the divine self-manifestation.¹⁶

¹⁴ Anshen, op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 126.

Here Tillich's method of correlation is applicable. The Christian message can be proclaimed without distortion, but unless it touches the listener existentially, it does not become the "Word of God" for him. The sermon or any other aspect of the Church's life can become the "Word of God" for someone, but this is not necessarily achieved by the mere transmission of the content of the Christian message.

The reception of the "Word of God" is a matter of ultimate concern to the one who hears it. In the Bible the "Word of God" has a power which does not belong to any other word. It cuts into the human situation and revolutionizes human existence. The end of the "Word of God" is not the bestowal of information but to bring about a transformation. As Tillich puts it:

The "Word of God" answers existential questions existentially; it does not tolerate theoretical detachment. He who receives a "Word" from God is involved in its truth with his whole existence. . . . The "Word of God" is not a collection of propositions, but a symbol for the dynamic, ever-changing encounter between man and what concerns him ultimately.¹⁷

V. SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

Tillich is convinced that the language of the church must include word symbols that speak to the

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 130 and 133.

contemporary age. One protest that must be made in the church is a protest against antiquated terminology. James Luther Adams reports that Tillich compares cutting into conventional religious language with dissecting a corpse. Tillich says that "we no longer have words in which the powerfulness of the word pulsates."¹⁸ He gives a challenge for innovation with respect to religious language, always keeping in mind that new words come into being only where there is vitality and new life. In Tillich's opinion, according to James Luther Adams,

. . . the traditional language of theology, despite any value it may possess for the expert, tends to create a gulf not only between the church and the world but also between the theologian and the layman. This traditional language often obscures and even perverts the essential and relevant message of the church, whether it is directed to the churchman or to the outsider. Because of it the characteristic doctrines of Christianity as well as the liturgy and preaching in the churches are at present largely ineffective. . . . By trying again and again to impose upon men as law the religious language of earlier generations, the churches are defeating their own proper ends.¹⁹

Because Tillich stresses contemporaneity with respect to religious language, we are not to assume that he is working for the complete abandonment of the traditional confessions and doctrines of the church. Tillich

¹⁸James Luther Adams, Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 2.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 7.

sees his vocation as giving "new relevance to the basic faith of the church, to give its doctrines, wherever possible, the living meaning implicit and latent within them."²⁰ It is Tillich's conviction that if the churches wish to communicate to modern man, they must

. . . discover anew the reality which was apprehended in earlier times and which is in essence the same today, and then present it in quite new terms. Only then can they understand that reality on the basis of what the old words intended.²¹

In spite of Tillich's insistence that religious language should be marked by contemporaneity, one of the persistent criticisms of Tillich is that his own language is obscure and, at times, incomprehensible. In writing about language it seems that Tillich does not deal extensively with the function of language. He points out that words serve as a means of communication that that language gives to man universals which set him free from the given or concrete situation, but it appears that Tillich deals inadequately with the purpose of language. What are human words for? Professor John A. Hutchison says that "words are to talk with,"²² and it is not evident that Tillich deals satisfactorily with this aspect of language and communication. As Dr. Hutchison puts it: "Human

²⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

²¹ Ibid., p. 11.

²² John A. Hutchison, Language and Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 16.

communication is language in action."²³ One wishes that Tillich had been more specific in talking about the functional aspect of language. He has, however, set the pace in calling the church to speak a relevant word to the age in which we live.

²³Ibid., p. 44.

CHAPTER III

SYMBOLS: THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH

In the previous chapter consideration was given to the nature and function of language in general. It is now necessary to deal specifically with the nature of religious language. Tillich has observed that we are rediscovering the fact that there are different levels of reality, "and that these different levels demand different approaches and different languages."¹ For example, a language which is suitable for the mathematical sciences is inadequate for expressing the great themes of human existence. Religious language is symbolical-mythological, and unless this is recognized there will be confusion in the communication of religious truth. The only language, therefore, which is adequate for faith is the language of symbols.

Samuel H. Miller has asserted that symbols are inevitable, the lack of which would seriously jeopardize speech itself and make communication virtually impossible. "Symbols are the true words of the spirit; to be without knowledge of their use, is to be illiterate in the ways

¹Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 54.

of religion."² This is one reason why Tillich has given such a prominent place to symbols in the development of his systematic theology. Tillich is of the opinion that the doctrinal symbols of Christianity "are no longer understood in their original power of expressing the human situation and of answering existential human questions,"³ and he sees part of his vocation as helping people to understand and experience the original power of these symbols.

The religious experience as ultimate concern is expressed in powerful and imaginative symbols. Only as these symbols are adequately interpreted and properly understood will religion have power to hold modern man. Tillich has defined faith as the state of being grasped by ultimate concern,⁴ and this faith must find expression through symbolic language. The language of symbols is the only adequate way to express the ultimate.

I. SYMBOLS AND SIGNS

In order to grasp the true meaning of symbols, it is necessary to point out some of the significant

²Samuel H. Miller, The Life of The Church (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 99.

³Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 50.

⁴Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 1.

differences and similarities between signs and symbols. Writers look at the term "symbol" from different perspectives, but here we will follow Tillich's line of thought.⁵ What are the important similarities and differences between these two kinds of terms in human utterance?

For one thing, the similarity between symbols and signs is evidenced by the fact that they both point beyond themselves to something else. A flashing light at the railroad crossing, for example, is a sign pointing to the law ordering motorists to be cautious or to stop. A symbol is also characterized by pointing beyond itself to the reality for which it stands. To cite an illustration, the materials of the Lord's Supper are symbolic, pointing beyond themselves to the sacrificial death of Jesus and the presence of his spirit in the world today. However, there is this important distinction between the sign and symbol: the significant use or purpose of a sign is referential, whereas the significant purpose of a symbol is expressive. This leads to a second distinction.

A second distinction between symbols and signs is that the symbol participates in the reality which is symbolized whereas the sign does not. The sign does not participate in the reality to which it points. For

⁵Ibid., pp. 41-54

example, the letters of the alphabet do not participate in the sound to which they point, but the flag is inextricably involved in that to which it points--the king or the nation which it symbolizes. Tillich considers this to be the most important characteristic of the symbol. He makes reference to the "innate power" of the symbol with the implication that the symbol has inherent power. Symbols are involved in the whole symbol situation.

From this observation concerning the symbol, it follows that the symbol cannot be exchanged or replaced at will. Only when a symbol loses its inner power does it disappear. Signs may be changed or removed as dictated by convention.

In addition to the characteristics of symbols already given, Tillich mentions several others. A third thing to be said about the symbol is that it helps us to be aware of levels of reality which otherwise would remain hidden to us. At this point a symbol has two edges. It opens up a level of reality outside ourselves and also a corresponding interior level of reality - a level of the soul. A great painting or some other work of art opens up a level of reality which cannot be opened in any other way. Similarly, it is possible that a famous piece of music may create a feeling of ecstasy in the individual soul, and one may feel an inner exaltation. Some dimensions of the human spirit are never brought to awareness

except through symbols. Seeing a great play, for instance, not only enables me to observe some facet of the human situation, but also gives me insight into my inner being.

The fourth characteristic of the symbol is its acceptability as a symbol. Simply stated, this means that a symbol cannot be invented intentionally. "The symbol is socially rooted and socially supported."⁶ Symbols come to birth in the context of a community, in a social situation where a group responds positively to something (a word, a flag, etc.) which symbolizes its very life. This means, of course, that when a symbol no longer opens up a level of reality for the "collective unconscious," the symbol dies.

The last sentence leads to a fifth characteristic of the symbol--namely, that symbols grow and die. They grow as long as the inner situation of the group is conducive for growth; they die when that situation undergoes drastic change and the group can no longer see itself in the symbol. Tillich says that "symbols do not grow because people are longing for them, and they do not die because of scientific or practical criticism. They die because they can no longer produce response in the group

⁶Paul Tillich, "The Religious Symbol," in Rollo May (ed.), Symbolism in Religion and Literature (New York: George Braziller, 1960), p. 76.

where they originally found expression."⁷ A case in point is the growth of the idea of the "king" at a certain period in history, and the death of that symbol in most parts of the world today.

II. THE RELIGIOUS SYMBOL

Having discussed the meaning of symbols generally, we can now consider Tillich's ideas concerning the religious symbol. Tillich makes the point that the religious symbol combines the general characteristics of the symbol with the distinctive qualities it has as a religious symbol.⁸ According to Tillich, the thing that distinguishes religious symbols from others is that they point to that which concerns us ultimately. "A real symbol points to an object which can never become an object. Religious symbols represent the transcendent but do not make the transcendent immanent. They do not make God a part of the empirical world."⁹

Religious symbols reveal a dimension of reality which otherwise would remain closed to us. Tillich refers to this level of reality as the "depth dimension of reality itself, the dimension of reality which is the ground

⁷Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 43.

⁸May, op. cit., p. 75.

⁹Ibid., p. 77.

of every other dimension and every other depth."¹⁰ This is the level of being itself, or the ultimate power of being.

The religious symbol points to the divine and participates in the power of the divine to which it points. Tillich points out that when we take any segment of finite experience to say something about God, we make that segment of experience a symbol. The question arises: Can you take a segment of finite reality and use this as a basis for saying something about the infinite? Tillich answers affirmatively on the basis that that which is infinite is identified with being-itself and everything participates in being-itself. This conclusion asserts Tillich, is the only way to justify speaking at all about God.¹¹ Everything we encounter in the world has its foundation in the ultimate ground of being.

Tillich has this to say about the truth of a religious symbol:

The truth of a religious symbol has nothing to do with the empirical assertions involved in it, be they physical, psychological or historical. A religious symbol possesses some truth if it adequately expresses the correlation of revelation in which some person

¹⁰Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 59.

¹¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 239-240.

stands. A religious symbol is true if it adequately expresses the correlation of some person with final revelation.¹²

The truth of a symbol has a double meaning. "A symbol has truth: it is adequate to the revelation it expresses. A symbol is true: it is the expression of a true revelation."¹³ This means that the truth of a religious symbol is seen in its adequacy to open up levels of reality and in its participation in that revelation which the symbol expresses.

Tillich says that religious symbols are double-edged:

They are directed toward the infinite which they symbolize and toward the finite through which they symbolize it. They force the infinite down to finitude and the finite up to infinity. They open the divine for the human and the human for the divine.¹⁴

This idea is expressed when God is symbolized as "Father." On the one hand God is brought down to the father-child relationship at the human level. On the other hand, this human relationship is given a sacramental quality. Tillich sees symbolic interpretation as performing a vital function in enhancing rather than diminishing the reality and power of religious language. The only adequate language of faith is the language of symbols. Faith, as the

¹²Ibid., p. 240.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, must express itself through symbolic language.

Tillich gives consideration to the levels of religious symbols. The two basic or fundamental levels are the transcendent level, which is the level that goes beyond encountered empirical reality, and the immanent level, which is found within the encounter with reality. Symbols of the first level are called "objective religious symbols" and those of the second level are identified as "self-transcending religious symbols."¹⁵

The religious symbols on the transcendent level can be subdivided into several groups. The basic symbol on this level is God himself. In Tillich's thought, God is the fundamental symbol for what concerns us ultimately. This does not mean, however, that God is reduced to a symbol. The question arises as to whether we can make a non-symbolic statement about God. Tillich asserts that when we make the statement that everything we say about God is symbolic, we are making the one statement which itself is not symbolic.¹⁶ In our image of God, the non-symbolic element is that God is ultimate reality, the ground of being. Tillich says that when we think of God as a

¹⁵May, op. cit., p. 89.

¹⁶Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, 9.

highest being, in which everything we have exists in perfection, we have a symbol for that which is not symbolic in the idea of God--namely, "Being Itself."¹⁷ Tillich is saying that our awareness of God as transcendent and unconditioned is not subject to symbolization, but the moment we begin talking about our relationship to God or God's approachableness we must use symbolic language.

While God is the fundamental symbol of faith, there are other symbols on the transcendent level. For example, we speak about the attributes or qualities of God--his love, power, mercy and so on. These qualities are taken from the realm of finite experience and applied symbolically to God. To apply these attributes to God in a literal sense is to distort religion and hasten its destruction. Similarly, we speak symbolically about the actions of God. Acts expressed in such statements as "He has created the world" or "He has sent his son," must be stated symbolically if religion is to have any power or authority in the life of contemporary man.

A second level in religious symbols is the immanent level. One element in immanent religious symbolism has to do with the incarnations of the divine. The idea of incarnation is not restricted to Christianity, as is

¹⁷Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 61.

evidenced by the incarnation idea in paganism. One of the qualities which goes along with transcendence is remoteness. It is this very experience of feeling far removed from the transcendent that makes incarnations necessary.

The second element in immanent religious symbolism is the sacramental. "The sacramental," says Tillich, "is nothing else than some reality becoming the bearer of the Holy in a special way and under special circumstances."¹⁸ The Lord's Supper illustrates the sacramental element in religious symbolism. Objects which serve as mediators of the divine spirit become sacramental materials. This material is not a mere sign pointing to something outside itself. In a true sense, sacramental material is a symbol and, as a symbol, is involved in what it expresses. A sacramental symbol participates in the power of what it symbolizes, and this qualifies it as a medium of the Spirit.¹⁹ The criterion for the selection of sacraments is whether or not they have the power to be bearers of the Spiritual Presence.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), III, 123.

III. SYMBOLS AND MYTHS

One of the things that leads to religious confusion is the misunderstanding regarding the relation between symbols and myths. Tillich makes the point that

. . . the symbols of faith do not appear in isolation. They are united in "stories of the gods," which is the meaning of the Greek word "mythos"-- myth myths are symbols of faith combined in stories about divine-human encounters.²⁰

In the world of myth man's ultimate concern is symbolized in divine figures and actions.

Myths have been criticized and rejected by many, but what is called for is to recognize a symbol as a symbol and a myth as a myth. While it is possible to replace one myth with another, it is impossible to isolate the myth from man's spiritual life. This is the case because in a myth we have symbols of that which concerns us ultimately. Tillich clarifies our understanding about myths by saying "A myth which is understood as a myth, but not removed or replaced, can be called a 'broken myth.'"²¹ This means, of course, that we should see the mythological elements of the Bible as mythological, recognize them as such and maintain their symbolic form. We will see the

²⁰ Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, pp. 48-49.

²¹ Ibid., p. 50.

mythological character of Christianity, but will recognize it as a broken myth.

When criticism of the myth runs to the extreme it ends up in the worst kind of literalism. God is stripped of ultimate power and brought down to a finite level. This kind of criticism is usually made by authoritarian systems in order to maintain power, under the pretence of providing security for people under their control.

Let it be said again that the only language adequate for faith is the language of symbols, and that symbols can grow and die. A symbol of faith cannot be replaced by other symbols, nor can a symbol be destroyed by scientific criticism. But a symbol can die if the situation in which it was created no longer exists. A good example is the Protestant attitude toward the Holy Virgin. This symbol, which has tremendous power for Roman Catholicism, holds no authority over Protestants. The reason is clear: Protestantism feels that men can have a direct, immediate relationship to God without the necessity of a mediating power.

Tillich points out that religion is ambiguous, which means that it can be creative and destructive at the same time. The religious symbol has a tendency to become idolatrous and elevate itself to ultimacy.

Religious symbols always have the tendency to replace that to which they are supposed to point and to become ultimate in themselves. And in the moment in which they do this, they become idols. All idolatry is nothing else than the absolutizing of symbols of the Holy, and making them identical with the Holy itself.²²

"Demonization" is the term Tillich uses to indicate the danger of religious symbols becoming ultimate in themselves. This can be seen in the way some people attribute a magical power to the Bible. Demonization means "identifying a particular bearer of holiness with the holy itself."²³

IV. THEOLOGY AND SYMBOLISM

Tillich is illuminating at the point of discussing the task of theology in regard to the symbol. The basic relation between theology and symbolism is seen in the observation that the object of theology is God's manifestation to us, and this manifestation finds expression in the religious symbol. In Tillich's view, in religious symbols

. . . there is expressed that which is the content of every religion, the basis of every religious experience and the foundation of every theology, the divine-human encounter. Theology, then, is the conceptual interpretation, explanation, and criticism of

²²Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 60.

²³Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 102.

the symbols in which a special encounter between God and man has found expression.²⁴

Another way of stating this is to say that symbols have two sides. "On one side, they are determined by the transcendent reality they express; on the other side, they are influenced by the situation of those for whom they point to this reality."²⁵ Tillich sees the task of theology "to look at both sides and interpret the symbols in such a way that a creative correlation can be established between them."²⁶

It does not lie within the power of theology to invent symbols. Theology can neither produce nor destroy symbols, for religious symbols are born and die. Religious symbols are expressions of the encounter between God and man and if that encounter disappears, the symbols themselves are no longer alive. What theology can do is to conceptualize, explain and criticize these symbols. The task of conceptualizing is to show the relation of the symbols to each other and to the whole of which they are a part. Thus, the theologian discloses the relation between the symbols of divine omnipotence and of human

²⁴Paul Tillich, "Theology and Symbolism," in F. Ernest Johnson (ed.), Religious Symbolism (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), p. 108.

²⁵Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 288.

²⁶Ibid., I, 289.

sin, of divine love and divine justice, of faith and works and so on. The theological task of explanation is an attempt to present in understandable form the relation of the symbols used to that to which they point. Theology explores the relationship between the religious meaning of the symbolic material and the original and simple meaning of the symbol. The function of criticism must take place on a symbolic level, for to fulfill this function on any other level is to reduce the religious symbol to meaninglessness. Tillich observes that a literalistic interpretation of symbols is one of the reasons for the disintegration of religion in our time.²⁷ He points out that this tendency toward literalism is a great problem for theology today, and one of the functions of theology is to guard against a narrow, literalistic approach to religious symbols. Symbols lose their meaning and power when they are criticized on a non-symbolic level.

Tillich indicates that to realize a full and rich symbolization is the great problem of Protestantism:

It must develop an attitude in which it is again able to accept symbols. Protestantism has gone through four hundred years of rational criticism and has learned that symbols are symbols, that they cannot be taken literally and that if they are taken literally they evoke a justified unfavorable reaction from the secular world. Against literal symbolism I have the same critical attitude as the rationalist, but only in order to protect religion. For it is the

²⁷ Ibid., p. 113.

first step in the deterioration of religion when it identifies symbols with the world of finite interrelations which furnishes the material of the symbols--which are the material and not that which is signified. That which is signified lies beyond the symbolic material. This is the first and last thing we must say about religious symbolism.²⁸

V. SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

The thesis which ties the sections of this chapter together is that faith requires the language of symbols for adequate expression. To understand the full impact of that thesis, it was necessary to elaborate on the distinctive characteristics of the symbol. Particular emphasis was given to the meaning of the religious symbol and its function in revealing a dimension of reality which otherwise would remain closed to us. An attempt was also made to clarify the relation between symbols and myths. Finally, consideration was given to the task of theology in regard to the symbol.

The abiding contribution of Tillich in the area of religious symbolism is that he discloses the power and meaning of traditional Christian symbols for what Professor John A. Hutchison calls "total or comprehensive life orientation."²⁹ Or, as Gustave Weigel has suggested, he

²⁸ Ibid., p. 116

²⁹ John A. Hutchison, Language and Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 119.

saves us from thinking that Christian affirmations have to be taken literally to be taken seriously.³⁰ A valid criticism that can be leveled against Tillich is that in his efforts to avoid absurd literalism in regard to the Bible, he does not take Christian history seriously enough. As one critic put it: "Can thoroughgoing trans-historical symbolism do justice to the historical preoccupations of the Christian message?"³¹ At this point we can see defects in Tillich's idea of symbolism, but this should not obscure the positive contributions of Tillich in helping the modern Christian man experience the power of the symbols by which he lives as a member of the Christian community.

As members of the Christian community, we are constantly reminded of the crisis in Christian communication. This crisis has been precipitated, in part, by a loss of the significance of the symbols which support and sustain communities of faith. What is needed for a restoration of communication is a full and rich symbolization. The central themes of the Christian faith can be adequately

³⁰Gustave Weigel, "Myth, Symbol and Analogy," in Walter Leibrecht (ed.), Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 125.

³¹Ibid., p. 126.

expressed only in symbolic form. As Lewis J. Sherrill has suggested,

Communication between one person and another regarding human predicament, regarding revelation, or regarding man's encounter with God requires symbols. In order to communicate with one another about anything, we must use symbols.³²

In stressing the importance of Biblical symbols, Sherrill writes:

When we come to consider Biblical symbols we are met by two significant facts. The first is that symbolism is the language in which the reports of revelation were recorded. The other fact is that Biblical symbols make up the basic vocabulary within the Christian community.

When the symbolism of the Bible is lost from the vocabulary of the Christian community there remains no common medium of communication regarding the predicament of men or the salvation of God.³³

Two obvious responsibilities rest upon us as communicators of the Christian message. First, we must understand the Biblical symbols as symbols, and know what these symbols meant in their original power. Secondly, ours is the task of making the Christian symbols understandable to the men of our time. Further consideration will be given to this aspect of our responsibility in a later chapter dealing specifically with the communication of the Christian message.

³² Lewis J. Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 122.

³³ Ibid., p. 126.

CHAPTER IV

COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE ARTS

In order to comprehend the whole spectrum of Tillich's thoughts on communication, it will now be necessary to examine his views on communication through the arts. This study is especially significant, for Tillich's interest in the arts has been of great importance to his theological reflections. The arts hold the possibility of expressing ultimate concern and opening dimensions of reality which cannot be grasped in any other way. It is no fault of Tillich that the church has neglected the arts as a medium for making the Christian symbols understandable in our time.

I. CLEAVAGE BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE ARTS

Sensitive art critics are pointing out that many of the most influential artists of our time represent a detachment from the Christian tradition. Amos Wilder has stated this problem succinctly:

The real problem, evidently, is that of the alienation of the artist and the creative writer from the Christian tradition as a whole. On the one hand their gifts have not been available to the Church in the service of the ecclesiastical arts. But more significant still, much of the really creative work of the modern age has not been inspired by or oriented to Christian presuppositions. It can be objected here that the artist, as artist, is not concerned with a religious confession one way or the other. But the

fact remains that many of the most talented and influential artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have represented not only a detachment from, but often a clear disaffection with, the religious traditions of the West.¹

That a cleavage has existed between the Church and the arts no one would deny. But it is particularly encouraging that that gulf is being bridged in our time. In the past few decades Protestant thinkers have begun giving serious attention to the relation of religion to the arts. Paul Tillich, perhaps more than any other theologian, is credited with prompting Protestantism to a genuine concern for the arts. He has been referred to as the

. . . father of recent Protestant thought on the arts, for it was he who first brought forcefully to the Protestant consciousness the awareness that art is the most sensitive barometer of the "faith" or "ultimate concern" of a generation or culture. It is this underlying assumption which permeates almost all contemporary Protestant reflection on the arts.²

It is natural that Tillich should be interested in the arts, for one of his dominant concerns has been with the whole relation between religion and culture. In his autobiographical sketch, Tillich says:

In experiencing the substantially religious character of culture I came to the boundary between religion and culture, and I have never left it. My philosophy

¹Amos N. Wilder, "Christianity and the Arts," The Christian Scholar, XL:4 (December 1957), 263.

²W. Paul Jones, "Art as the Creator of Lived Meaning," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XXXI:3 (July 1963), 226.

of religion is chiefly concerned with the theoretical aspects of this boundary.³

II. RELIGION AND CULTURE

Before dealing specifically with the relation between religion and the arts, several preliminary remarks need to be made in regard to the larger context of religion and culture. It has already been noted that culture is that which takes care of something, keeps it alive, and makes it grow. Reference has also been made to Tillich's definition of religion as being ultimately concerned or the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern. Tillich points out the essential belongingness of religion and culture to each other in the statement that "religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion."⁴ Tillich goes on to say that

Religion cannot express itself even in meaningful silence without culture, from which it takes all forms of meaningful expression. And culture loses its depth and inexhaustibility without the ultimacy of the ultimate.⁵

Religion is the substance or ground out of which culture lives. When this religious element is lost, culture is

³Paul Tillich, On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), p. 69.

⁴Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), III, 248.

⁵Ibid., III, 249.

left with an empty form and lacks ultimate meaning. Likewise, religion is dependent upon the totality of forms provided by culture for its expression.

From the principle that religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion, two other principles are derived. One of these principles is labeled by Tillich as "the principle of the consecration of the secular."⁶ This means that the secular is open to the impact of the spiritual quite apart from mediation on the part of a church. It is an affirmation of the freedom of the Spirit to exercise an impact upon culture independently of traditional religion. According to this principle, God's Spirit can work through antireligious media to bring about transformation in culture and in the churches.

A second principle concerning the relation between religion and culture is referred to as the principle of "convergence of the holy and the secular."⁷ In Tillich's view, the secular is driven toward the holy, for it is only in union with the holy that the secular is saved from emptiness and meaninglessness. The holy and the secular belong to each other, and neither can exist standing alone. That the holy cannot exist without the secular is

⁶Ibid., III, 247.

⁷Ibid.

seen in the simple fact that if religion desires to reject the secular it must use secular forms to express its rejection.

Much of this thinking is rooted in what Tillich calls "the Protestant principle." The Protestant principle is defined as:

. . . an expression of the conquest of religion by the Spiritual Presence and consequently an expression of the victory over the ambiguities of religion, its profanization, and its demonization. It is Protestant, because it protests against the tragic-demonic self-elevation of religion and liberates religion from itself for the other functions of the human spirit, at the same time liberating these functions from their self-seclusion against the manifestations of the ultimate.⁸

The Protestant principle is an acknowledgment that the majesty of the divine is set over against every human claim, including every religious claim. This means that no church, and no self-expression of any church, can lay claim to absoluteness. This includes the artistic self-expression of a church, as well as styles of thought, doctrine, cult or ethics.

From the Protestant principle it follows that there is a close relation of the sacred to the secular world and all kinds of secular creations. Tillich affirms that Protestantism has a passion for the secular. Understanding

⁸Ibid., III, 245.

religion as a state of being ultimately concerned, one can find God without going into the holy of holies. God can be found in every place. Tillich makes a vehement protest against the fragmentation of life into a sacred and a secular sphere. He points out that the gap which exists between religion and culture is evidence that the Kingdom of God has not yet come, that God is not yet all in all. Asked what the proof is for the fall of the world, Tillich answers:

Religion itself, namely a religious culture beside a secular culture, a temple beside a town hall, a Lord's Supper beside a daily supper, prayer beside work, meditation beside research.⁹

In other words, part of the predicament of man is that he is in bondage to preliminary concerns, and this keeps him from investing all aspects of life--every joy, every meal, every labor--with ultimate concern. It is because of man's existential situation that the religious element and the secular element tend to establish themselves as separate and independent realms.

III. ART AND RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

Having examined the relation between religion and culture, we now turn to a consideration of art as a cultural creation through which religion finds expression.

⁹Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 59.

Tillich indicates that he has a personal preference for the visual arts, for in the visual arts there are immense possibilities for interpreting the Christian symbols. The development of the visual arts has helped to liberate our understanding of Christianity from what Tillich calls "beautifying realism."¹⁰ Art of this kind lacks expressive power and is content with beauty on a superficial level.

In The Religious Situation Tillich gives his theological understanding of the meaning of art:

While science and philosophy have an immediate and causal significance for the spiritual situation of a time, whether as destructive or constructive forces, art is to be evaluated only as a mediate cause. For its immediate task is not that of apprehending essence but that of expressing meaning. Art indicates what the character of a spiritual situation is; it does this more immediately and directly than do science and philosophy for it is less burdened by objective considerations.¹¹

It is obvious that Tillich is primarily concerned with the expressive power of art. He talks about art that is both authentically artistic and significantly religious. Authentically artistic art is marked by aliveness and vitality. It comes out as the product of the artist's

¹⁰D. Mackenzie Brown, Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 39-40.

¹¹Paul Tillich, The Religious Situation (Cleveland: World, 1956), p. 85.

creative imagination. Such art will reveal the artist's distinctive artistic personality. It will also exemplify the artist's "school" or "movement," and the style of his own historical epoch. Commenting on this Tillich says:

Thus, a contemporary Picasso will be in the individual style, and more specifically in the current style, of Picasso himself. It will also be in the expressionistic Western European tradition; and it will be, in its own way, expressive of the mid-twentieth century.¹²

In genuine art the emphasis is upon creativity; real art is characterized by freshness and honesty. In this art is radically different from what Tillich calls "prescriptive" or "academic" art. Prescriptive art is marked by an imitation of some older style. Here there is an imitation of styles which once had creative possibilities, but which do not have power to express religion for the present situation. Tillich says that the most famous example of prescriptive art is the pseudo-Gothic imitation in church architecture.¹³

Artistically authentic art can be significantly religious, and this happens in two specific ways. First of all, it can be implicitly religious if the artist's

¹²Paul Tillich and Theodore M. Green, "The Nature of Religious Art," in Lyman Bryson (ed.), Symbols and Society (New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, 1955), p. 283.

¹³Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 199.

honest search for ultimate meaning is expressed. This does not necessarily imply the use of religious symbols. Secondly, authentic art is explicitly religious if the artist uses religious symbols in expressing his search for ultimate meaning. However, it should be noted that if ultimate concern is absent, even the use of religious subject matter does not guarantee artistic integrity. Much so-called religious art today is totally lacking in religious expressiveness and artistic value.¹⁴

Tillich expresses the view that the entire development of modern art and existentialism is only possible if religion is seen as "being ultimately concerned about one's own being, about one's self and one's world, about its meaning and its estrangement and its finitude."¹⁵ The words "religious art" usually bring to mind certain religious symbols, such as pictures of Christ. However, another meaning is apparent when one considers religion in a larger context. Art is seen as giving expression to an ultimate concern.

¹⁴Tillich, "The Nature of Religious Art," p. 283.

¹⁵Paul Tillich, "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art," in Carl Michalson (ed.), Christianity and the Existentialists (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 132.

IV. LEVELS OF RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND ART

Tillich identifies what he calls the four levels of relation between religion and art:¹⁶

1. Non-religious Style, Non-religious Content. On this level ultimate concern is not expressed with directness but only indirectly. Having no religious content, this kind of art is usually labeled secular. It deals with landscapes and other things on the level of secular human existence. Because God is present in secular structures, this kind of art has the possibility of expressing ultimate concern. Art opens up a dimension of reality which cannot be grasped in any other way, and it opens up our own being for receiving this reality.

2. Religious Style, Non-religious Content: The Existentialist Level. This level occupies a central place in Tillich's thinking. On this level no religious content is evident, but the style is the thing that makes possible the self-interpretation of a particular historical period. Style has reference to the over-all form in which the artist of a particular period expresses the meaning of that historical epoch. Tillich says that the characteristic of this style is that a breakthrough occurs in which

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 133-144.

something out of the depths breaks through the familiar surface of our world and our own self. The power of art on this level grasps us because it breaks through things as they are ordinarily seen and heard and touched and felt.

The illustration which Tillich uses most frequently as representative of this level is Picasso's painting which bears the title, "Guernica." In a discussion about Protestantism and the visual arts, Tillich made the statement that "Guernica" is a most Protestant painting. He qualified his statement by saying that it was the Protestant question rather than the Protestant answer that is to be found in Picasso's painting.¹⁷ Picasso's "Guernica" tells us something about the human predicament in our time. It reveals man in a world of guilt, anxiety and despair. No effort is made to hide this situation. Here the disruption of human existence is placed before us and compels us to face the human situation in all its estrangement and despair. Guernica was a small town in Northern Spain which was completely destroyed by Fascist air attacks. It was a case of "saturation bombing" with the result that nothing was left. Picasso painted this total disruptiveness of life, and in painting the pieces

¹⁷Paul Tillich, "Protestantism and the Contemporary Style in the Visual Arts," The Christian Scholar, XL:4 (1957), 307.

of men and animals and houses all together, he makes visible the "piece" character of modern existence.

"Guernica" has no specific religious content, but in expressing the human situation it does possess a profound religious style.

3. Non-religious Style, Religious Content. On this level one can put pictures of Christ, pictures of the saints, of the Holy Virgin and the Holy Child. Here we are aware of the possibility for an artist to take a traditional religious subject matter and treat it non-religiously. As Tillich makes clear, religious content in a picture is no guarantee that you have a religious painting. He says that we must fight against "beautifying sentimentality in religious magazines."¹⁸

4. Religious Style, Religious Content. At this level, style and content agree, and the result is an art which can properly be called religious. The artist takes a religious subject matter and treats it religiously in such a way that the surface is penetrated and something breaks forth in expression. For this reason, such art is usually called expressionistic. Tillich has made the statement "that all specifically religious art is

¹⁸Paul Tillich, in a letter to the editors, Christianity and Crisis, XVI:3 (March 5, 1956), 24.

expressionistic throughout the history of mankind. . . .
It expresses the ground of being itself."¹⁹

Tillich believes that the rediscovery of the expressive element in art has made it possible to have religious art again. He speaks convincingly regarding this possibility:

The predominance of the expressive style in contemporary art is a chance for the rebirth of religious art. . . . Whether, and to what degree, the artists (and the churches) will use this opportunity cannot be anticipated. It is partly dependent on the destiny of the traditional religious symbols themselves in their development during the next decades. The only thing we can do is to keep ourselves open for a new rise of religious art through the expressive style in the art of today.²⁰

V. ARCHITECTURE AS AN ARTISTIC STYLE

Tillich has some very specific comments to make on architecture as an artistic style. Allusion has already been made to his disdain for imitation in the arts. Tillich believes that an artist is under the demand of "the principle of honesty." This means that the artist will not imitate old styles which once had possibilities for expression but which are no longer able to speak with expressive power for the actual situation. In keeping

¹⁹Paul Tillich, "Theology, Architecture and Art," Church Management, XXXIII: 1 (October 1956), 55.

²⁰Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 75.

with this principle, Tillich points out that the most famous--or infamous--example is the pseudo-Gothic imitation in church architecture.²¹

Architecture is the basic visual art, but it cannot be seen in line with the visual arts generally. It is distinguished from other visual arts in that it is partly determined by purpose. The practical purpose is to construct a house or some other building. The apparent disadvantage in this is that architecture cannot be directly and purposely expressive as a picture or sculpture. The great advantage, however, is that architecture is bound to a purpose and this leaves little room for irrational imagination.²² Commenting on domestic architecture, Tillich says that a house is more than a "dwelling machine." He states that what must be done first of all in a building is:

. . . to single out from the infinite space, into which we are thrown in our nakedness, a piece of finite space which protects us against the infinite. The purpose of a building is always to produce something which makes existence in time and space possible for a finite being; to give him that limited space from which he can then go forward into infinite space; psychologically it gives him what we sentimentally call a home. The metaphysics of home includes adequate surrounding materials but goes far beyond.²³

²¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, p. 199.

²²Tillich, "Theology, Architecture, and Art," p. 56.

²³Ibid.

In regard to church architecture, Tillich is pleased to see the development of a new architectural style all over the Christian world. In many of the modern churches he sees a style which is free from imitation and expressive of the period in which we live. Tillich is sympathetic with those churches that are using tinted windows, but has little sympathy when they make use of figures in the windows. Figures belong to Gothic forms and should not be imitated in church buildings today. Our alternative is to use mathematical forms, pieces of color put together. This, says Tillich, would be more adequate for our feeling "in which all forms of life have been brought down to geometric forms." Elaborating on this Tillich says:

We seem not to be able any more to understand the organic forms in the way in which we did in former centuries, but we are much better able to understand the underlying spiritual power of geometric forms. We should not say that religious life must express itself in organic forms if it is the real possibility of our time to express it in cubic forms.²⁴

The significance Tillich attaches to architecture is seen in his feeling that perhaps architecture can be the means of a rebirth of modern religious art:

If architecture leads, born out of purpose, then the same thing will probably happen that happened in the early periods of mankind where the tool was loaded with magic power and therefore became beautiful. It

²⁴Ibid.

was a tool and at the same time a work of art. The separation of technology and art is a very late development which can perhaps be recanted by an architecture which gives great possibilities in its very nature as architecture.²⁵

VI. DANCE AS A FORM OF EXPRESSION

Some consideration will now be given to Tillich's views on the dance as a form of expression. The dance became religiously significant for Tillich when he was a professor in Dresden. Here he became acquainted with Mary Wigman, one of the foremost creators of modern expressive dance. To see the expressive power of the moving body, the organization of space by the dancers, the embodiment of rhythm in visible movements provided the context in which Tillich says he experienced reality in its deeper levels.²⁶ He indicates that the expressive power of the dance inspired his understanding of religion as the spiritual substance of culture and of culture as the expressive form of religion. It also set him to thinking more seriously on the question "of how the lost unity could be regained between cult and dance on the hard and unreceptive soil of Protestantism."²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Paul Tillich, "The Dance: What It Means To Me," Dance Magazine, XXXI:6 (June 1957), 20.

²⁷ Ibid.

One of the hopeful signs of our time is that churches are becoming more receptive to the idea of using the dance to praise God and stimulate meaningful worship. An issue of Life, dated October 21, 1966, featured several churches which were experimenting with the dance in the worship service.²⁸ At Boston's Old South Church, teenagers frugged in aisles as a combo accompanied the litany. A traveling troupe performed a dance cantata at a Jewish Temple in Lexington, Massachusetts. A dance class is held at Union Theological Seminary in New York to teach future ministers how to free and use their bodies. The class is now a regular part of Union's curriculum. In the article in Life, Dr. Harvey Cox makes the following observation:

Use of the dance is almost totally new to Western Christianity. Israelites danced before the Lord, and in many other cultures dance and drama are virtually indistinguishable, and both are laden with ritual significance. But Christian suspicion of the dance is a deep-seated inhibition of long standing, and the recent introduction of rhythmic choir into church chancels must be considered a real breakthrough.²⁹

Dr. Cox sees liturgical experiments as signs of a vital and healthy church. Pointing out that Christianity needs the arts, Cox says:

Modern dance and jazz in the sanctuary bring just that direct delight in the body and confidence in the sensual that restore a needed element of Old Testament

²⁸"Churches Take a Cue from Show Biz," Life, LXI:17 (October 1966), 63.

²⁹Ibid., p. 70.

earthiness to a faith that has become arid and ethereal. . . . The new openness to the arts may also be of use to those whose faith is centered on carefully embalmed tradition and help them encounter a God who, despite rumors to the contrary, is still very much alive.³⁰

Tillich would be in agreement with Harvey Cox in stressing the significance of the art of dance as a form of spiritual expression. As an art form, the dance has expressive power and serves as a medium by which man becomes aware of the deeper levels of reality. The dance is a cultural creation which can be used by the church in building up its life. The meaning of the church's life can be dramatically expressed in the art of dance; the dance is a way of acting out or expressing the great themes of human existence.

VII. SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

Tillich's discussion of communication through the arts must be set in the larger context of the relation between religion and culture. Religion has no language of its own and must be actualized through cultural forms. The church has not always taken the arts seriously but, in our generation, there has been a restoration of communication between the church and culture. Paul Tillich has carried major responsibility in helping the church

³⁰Ibid., p. 72.

discover something of the nature and relevance of the arts. He has deepened our awareness of the close relation between the sacred and the secular. God is not locked inside a sacred sphere, but can be found in every place. The holy and the secular belong to each other.

A consequence of this kind of thinking is that Tillich emphasizes the power of the visual arts for religious expression. Ultimate concern can be expressed in a unique way through art. Tillich clarifies the levels of relation between religion and art, and places strong emphasis on the style of art that has the power to break through the familiar surface of our world and bring to our senses something of the depth of our world and ourselves, something of the mystery of being.

In the concluding sections of this chapter, attention was given to Tillich's views on architecture and the dance. Tillich has a feeling that architecture can be the means of a rebirth of modern religious art. Dance, as a form of spiritual expression, has the possibility of heightening our experience of reality in its deeper levels.

One theme that runs throughout Tillich's consideration of the arts is that religion is lost without the arts. Without the arts the church has no language for the adequate expression of her faith. It is Tillich's view that

Existentialist art has a tremendous religious function, in visual art as well as in all other realms of art, namely, to rediscover the basic questions to which the Christian symbols are the answers in a way which is understandable to our time.³¹

This leads to one area of the arts, particularly the visual arts, where Tillich does not have a great deal to say. In writing about the arts, Tillich deals almost exclusively with those pictures or paintings which depict the disruption and despair of life. The paintings emphasized by Tillich represent only one half of the Christian message, namely, the human situation. Those paintings are singled out which function to expose the basic questions of human existence. However, Tillich gives little guidance regarding the answering function of the visual arts. If the principle of correlation gives any kind of direction to our thinking, it would seem that our attention must not be focused solely on art that reveals the human situation. We must hope for a rebirth of the visual arts which are able to express the Christian symbols as answers to the questions implied in human existence.

³¹Michalson, op. cit., p. 146-147.

CHAPTER V

TOWARD A MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

I. FACTORS UNDERLYING STUDY

As indicated previously, this final chapter will focus on the communication of the Christian message, and will point toward a ministry of communication. At least two important factors underly this discussion. The first factor was underscored by Professor Allen J. Moore when he observed that the church has a tendency to forget that in this modern age there are numerous alternatives to genuine Christian faith. With specific reference to young adults, Dr. Moore points out that

. . . we tend to communicate as if there were no other alternatives for the young adult. This is utterly untrue. Even those within the church have often found other frames of reference for living out their lives. For many young adults, churchism is not altogether rejected but they are increasingly making commitments to other claims upon their lives.¹

What has been said about young adults is equally true of other segments of our population. No longer is religion a pervasive element of contemporary life. In

¹Allen J. Moore, "The Young Adult: A Study in Christian Communication in An Urban Society," in The Transition Years (Nashville: General Board of Education of The Methodist Church, 1964), p. 17.

fact, in most areas the world goes its way without reference to religion.

A second factor prompting this study is the feeling that the Christian symbols are answers to the basic questions of human existence, and that these symbols can be understandable in our time. In the Christian symbols one can find frames of reference for total life orientation. As a prominent theologian and preacher, Paul Tillich has been effective in interpreting the Christian symbols so that they speak with power to the human situation.

II. THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH

The effective communication of the Christian Gospel requires a knowledge and understanding of the meaning of the church. The church is a continuation of the New Reality which has appeared in Christ. Several reasons may be cited for making the claim that an understanding of the church is essential for a ministry of communication.

The first reason is found in Tillich's assertion that every activity of the church must be an activity which follows necessarily from the very nature of the church.² Thus, the ministry of communicating the Christian message is demanded by the nature of the church.

²Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), III, 182.

Tillich insists that the church has the function of answering the questions implied in man's existence, and the meaning of this existence.³

A second reason lies in Tillich's definition of the church. He has called the church the "Community of the New Being."

It is primarily a group of people who express a new reality by which they have been grasped. Only this is what the Church really means. It is the place where the power of the New Reality which is Christ, and which was prepared in all history and especially in Old Testament history, moves into us and is continued by us.⁴

The continuation in the church of the New Reality which is Christ clearly involves a ministry of communication.

Closely related to the second is a third reason for stressing the importance of the church for a ministry of communication. It can be stated like this: the church must be able to engage in theological reflection upon its own life and existence before it can develop styles of ministry to carry on its mission in the world. A doctrine of the church is essential for a ministry of communication.

³Paul Tillich, "The Church and Contemporary culture," World Christian Education, XI:2 (1956), 42.

⁴Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 212.

The Nature of The Church

In seeking to discover the meaning of the church, Tillich begins by defining the "Spiritual Community." Tillich insists that "the Spiritual Community is not a group existing beside other groups but rather a power and a structure inherent and effective in such groups, that is, in religious communities."⁵ This idea is determinative for Tillich's doctrine of the church. The term "Spiritual Community" has been employed to give sharp delineation to the concept of the church which is called the "body of Christ" by the New Testament. It has been referred to as the "invisible essence of the religious communities." If such a community is based on the appearance of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ it is called a church. Tillich pointed out in the second volume of Systematic Theology that Christ would not be the Christ without those who receive him as the Christ. His bringing a new reality would be impossible without those who have accepted the new reality in him and from him. Therefore, it can be stated that "as Christ is not the Christ without those who receive him as the Christ, so the Spiritual

⁵Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 162.

Community is not Spiritual unless it is founded on the New Being as it has appeared in the Christ."⁶

The Spiritual Community is determined by the appearance of Jesus as the Christ, but it is not identical with the Christian churches. Tillich here introduces his distinction between the church "manifest" and the church "latent." These terms are not to be confused with the distinction between the invisible and the visible church; however, the distinctions do overlap. Tillich says the qualities invisible and visible must be applied to the church both in its latency and in its manifestation. "It is the Spiritual Community that is latent before an encounter with the central revelation and manifest after such an encounter."⁷ Tillich indicates that a double meaning is involved in this "before" and "after." On the one hand, it refers to the world historical event, the "basic kairos," and on the other hand, it refers to the recurring kairoi in which a religious cultural group encounters the central event existentially. "'Before' and 'after' in connection with the Spiritual Community's latency and manifestation refer directly to the second sense of the words and only indirectly to the first."⁸

⁶Ibid., III, 150.

⁷Ibid., III, 153.

⁸Ibid.

In an article on "The Theology of Missions,"⁹ Tillich expresses the ideas of latency and manifestation in the context of the Christian interpretation of history. In this interpretation history is divided by the center of history into two main sections, the period before the center and the period after the center. This is true in a different way for different people and different nations. Today there are many people still living before the event of Jesus as the Christ. Those who have accepted Jesus as the Christ are living after the center of history.

The period before the manifestation of the center of history either in history universally, or in particular individuals, nations, and groups can be called the period in which the bearer of the Kingdom of God in history is latent.¹⁰

This is the period of the latency of the church. This is true of paganism, of Judaism and of humanism. In these groups the church is not yet manifest, but it is present in its latency, and prepares for the coming of the center of history. Once the center of history has been received, there is a Christian church in its manifest state, in a state which is no longer preparation, but reception of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

⁹Paul Tillich, "The Theology of Missions," Christianity and Crisis, XV:4 (March 21, 1955), 35.

¹⁰Ibid.

J. Heywood Thomas sums this up by saying

. . . the manifest church is a definite historical group within which the New Being receives concrete historical expression. By the manifest church Tillich means the historical communities which have called themselves Christian and in which the living Christ has been revealed. The latent church is not such a specifiable or identifiable historical group, and is made up of those groups within paganism, Judaism or humanism which also reveal or actualize the New Being.¹¹

Tillich sees the power of the New Being demonstrated in groups outside organized churches. Among these groups Tillich would list youth alliances, friendship groups, educational, artistic and political movements, and individuals in whom the impact of the Spiritual Presence is felt. These groups or individuals may even be indifferent or hostile to organized churches, but this does not exclude them from the Spiritual Community. "The churches represent the Spiritual Community in a manifest religious self-expression, whereas the others represent the Spiritual Community in secular latency."¹²

Tillich does show that the Spiritual Community in its latency lacks the ultimate criterion of faith and love as it is manifest in Christ.

The Spiritual Community in its latency is therefore open to profanization and demonization without an ultimate principle of resistance, whereas the

¹¹J. Heywood Thomas, Paul Tillich: An Appraisal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 140.

¹²Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 153.

Spiritual Community organized as a church has the principle of resistance in itself and is able to apply it self-critically.¹³

Tillich sees a latent Spiritual Community in non-Christian religions, in mystery cults and mystical religions. In all these groups there are elements of faith in the sense of being grasped by an ultimate concern, but the Spiritual Community is still latent. They are without an ultimate principle of resistance, the criterion of the faith and love of the Christ. These groups, however, are teleologically related to the Spiritual Community in its manifest state. That is to say, "they are unconsciously driven toward the Christ, even though they reject him when he is brought to them through the preaching and actions of the Christian churches."¹⁴ It is possible, in some respects, that these groups, by opposing the churches, are better representatives of the Spiritual Community than the churches themselves. Tillich says that even world communism is teleologically related to the Spiritual Community. The recognition that there is a latent church saves us from ecclesiastical arrogance.

The Marks of The Church

Tillich now considers the marks of the Spiritual Community.¹⁵ Turning to the story of Pentecost, he sees

¹³Ibid., III, 154.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., III, 155.

certain elements in the Spiritual Community's character. These elements are distinguished as ecstasy, faith, love, unity and universality. When these elements are missing there is no Spiritual Community. In its latent or manifest form the distinctive thing about the Spiritual Community is that it is created by the divine Spirit as revealed in the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. As such, the Spiritual Community is a community of faith and love. From this follows the character of the Spiritual Community as a community of unity and universality.

Tillich makes it clear, however, that these elements are paradoxically present in the churches. "The paradox of the churches is that they participate, on the one hand, in the ambiguities of life in general and of the religious life in particular and, on the other hand, in the unambiguous life of the Spiritual Community."¹⁶ The churches, therefore, must be seen under two aspects, represented in the distinction between the church visible and invisible. The invisible church must be seen as the Spiritual essence of the visible church. Although hidden, the invisible church determines the nature of the visible church. In similar fashion the Spiritual Community does not exist along side the churches, but is the essential power in every actual church, fighting against ambiguities

¹⁶Ibid., III, 165.

Another way to express this is to say "that it is essentiality determining existence and being resisted by existence."¹⁷

Perhaps even greater clarification is given if we speak of the sociological and theological aspects of the church. Tillich says that every church is a sociological reality. As such it is subject to the laws which govern the life of social groups with all their ambiguities. Sociologists of religion are therefore justified when they point to the ambiguities of the churches--social stratification, power struggles, conflict between freedom and organization, etc. Seen in the sociological perspective, the churches show destructive and demonic elements that characterize other social groups. "The church at the street corner hides the church Spiritual from view."¹⁸ Tillich says the churches cannot be adequately judged on the basis of their sociological functions or social influence.

A church which is nothing more than a benevolent, socially useful group can be replaced by other groups not claiming to be churches; such a church has no justification for its existence.¹⁹

Another aspect of the churches is theological. The theological view is not blind to the ambiguities of the churches, but points to the presence of the unambiguous

¹⁷Ibid., III, 163. ¹⁸Ibid., III, 166. ¹⁹Ibid.

Spiritual Community. Commenting on the sociological and theological aspects of the church, Nels Ferré said

The church is always and everywhere theological and sociological at the same time; it is a concrete embodiment in history of ultimate meaning, among its own finite fractions and distorted fragments. As such it is both invisible, or open to faith alone, and visible, or open to empirical investigations.²⁰

The churches, having a paradoxical character, bear the marks of the Spiritual Community because they point to the presence of the New Being in Christ. The churches are holy because of their foundation: the New Being in Christ. Living in the ambiguities of religion, the churches also bear the mark of holiness. "The holy church is the distorted church, and this means every church in time and space."²¹ Tillich says that the churches are embodiments of the New Being and creations of the Spiritual Presence. The essential power of the churches is the Spiritual Community which works toward unambiguity through the ambiguities that characterize the churches. The result of this is that in the churches, even at their worst, there is a regenerative power at work. Tillich says that

. . . as long as they are churches and related in reception and reaction to the New Being in Jesus as the Christ, the Spiritual Presence works in them, and

²⁰Nels F. S. Ferré, "Tillich's View of the Church," in Charles Kegley and Robert Bretall (eds.), The Theology of Paul Tillich (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 256.

²¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 168.

symptoms of this work can always be seen. It is generic to the churches' holiness that they have the principle of reformation within themselves.²²

Similarly, the churches are also universal and unified. These attributes are authentic in spite of actual sinfulness, or existential separation, and actual division. The churches are united because of the unity of their foundation, the New Being, which is present in them. Maurice B. Schepers, a Roman Catholic scholar, points out that

Tillich sees the ambiguity of unity and division in the churches' historical existence as not susceptible of resolution by means of a force such as the ecumenical movement. The reason for this is simply that ecumenism and similar movements are operative principally on a horizontal plane, whereas the unity of the churches consists in a relation that is vertical.²³

Tillich asserts that new division would appear even if it were possible to have a united World Church. This is the case because the dynamics of life, the ambiguities implied in the sociological existence of the churches, and the insistent demand for reformation would bring about new divisions. It remains that the divided church is the united church.

²² Ibid.

²³ Maurice B. Schepers, "Paul Tillich on the Church," in Thomas A. O'Mera and Celestin D. Weissner (eds.), Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought (Dubuque: Priory Press, 1964), p. 240.

Universality (catholicity) is paradoxically present in the churches. The churches are universal in two ways--intensively and extensively. Intensive universality is defined as "the power and desire to participate as church in everything created under all dimensions of life."²⁴ This principle implies that the church must be marked by an openness as wide as life universal. "Nothing that is created and, therefore, essentially good is excluded from the life of the churches and their members."²⁵ Extensive universality is seen as the "validity of the church's foundation for all nations, social groups, races, tribes and cultures." The New Testament shows that this aspect of the churches' universality is implied in the acceptance of Jesus as the bringer of the New Being.

The ambiguities we have mentioned are carried over into every aspect of the life of the churches, even into the interior realms of faith and love. The distinguishing thing about the churches is that they are communities of those who affirm that Jesus is the Christ. This affirmation is the foundation of the churches. It follows from this that any denial of this principle would result in one's exclusion from the church.

²⁴Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 170.

²⁵Ibid.

The church is also a community of love and, as such, actualized the Spiritual Community. The character of the churches as communities of love is paradoxical. The love of the Spiritual Community is manifested, but it is manifested under the condition of the ambiguities of life. Since it is a community of love, the church is a place of equality. This implies that those forms of inequality which make a real community of love impossible must be attacked and transformed.

The church's prophetic word must be heard against such forms of inhumanity and injustice, but first of all the church must transform the given social structure within itself.²⁶

The church as a community of love involves the church in exercising judgment against that which negates love. This judgment is directed not only against those outside the church's community, but against those inside the community. The church has to guard against the ambiguity of judging, lest the church become demonic and destructive in its judging function. Tillich suggests that "for this reason there is present in the church the Spirit, which judges the church's judging and struggles against its distortions."²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., III, 178.

²⁷ Ibid., III, 179.

The Functions of The Churches

We now turn to Tillich's understanding of the functions of the churches. Tillich claims that "every activity of the church must be derived from the foundation of the church itself. It must be an activity which follows necessarily from the very nature of the church."²⁸ Functions of the church are necessary and are, therefore, the subject of theological consideration.

A question which might be raised is this: In what way is a doctrine of the churches and their functions a subject of systematic theology and how is it to be considered as a subject of practical theology. The line between the two is not sharply drawn. However, Tillich indicates that the task of systematic theology is to analyze the theological principles governing the functions of the churches, whereas the task of practical theology is to suggest the practical tools and methods most adequate for the exercise of the churches' functions. This does not mean that there is a sharp distinction between systematic and practical theologians. Both consider theological principles as well as methods, but each is committed to one of them in his work.

²⁸Tillich, "Theology of Missions," p. 35.

According to Tillich the external functions of the churches belong to four groups: the constitutive, expanding, constructing and relating functions. Each function is characterized by a sort of tension which he calls paradoxical or ambiguous. We will try to summarize Tillich's ideas concerning these functions. These functions are always present in the church because they flow from the nature of the church as a community of faith and love.

1. The first group of functions is identified as the function of constitution. "The constitutive function of a church is that of receiving."²⁹ We are here introduced to Tillich's explanation of how the churches are sustained in existence. This happens through the function of mediation, wherein one person ministers to another person. In the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments there is always a giving and a receiving, and this is how the church is held in existence. Tillich points out, however, that in practice mediation and reception are the same: "the church is priest and prophet to itself. He who preaches preaches to himself as listener, and he who listens is a potential preacher."³⁰ Thus, the building of a church structure in which some members are hierarchical (mediators) and others are laymen (receivers)

²⁹Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 189.

³⁰Ibid.

is not integral to the function of the church. "Whoever mediates must himself respond, and whoever responds mediates to his mediator." In this connection Tillich notes that, in worship, which includes adoration, prayer and contemplation, the churches respond to the ultimate ground of their being.

As indicated above, each function is characterized by ambiguity. The paradox or ambiguity found in the function of constitution consists in a certain tension between "tradition" and "reformation." In the churches, tradition expresses the unity of historical mankind, of which the appearance of Christ is the center. Tradition is the link between the foundation of the church and every new generation. Tillich points out that "there is no reformation without tradition." There is tension between these two principles, but they are not in conflict. The principle of reformation is a permanent principle, fighting against the ambiguities of religion. It is a "corrective against the demonic suppression of the freedom of the Spirit by a tradition which is vested with absolute validity."³¹ (Protestant Principle).

2. The expanding functions of the churches include missions, education and evangelism. Tillich sees the purpose of missions as "the actualization of the Spiritual

³¹Ibid., III, 185.

Community within concrete churches all over the world."³²
 Here the emphasis is placed on the geographical aspect of the churches' expansion. Concerning the educational function of the church, Tillich points out that

. . . the churches' task is to introduce each new generation into the reality of the Spiritual Community, into its faith and into its love. This happens through participation in degrees of maturity, and it happens through interpretation in degrees of understanding.³³

The evangelistic task is directed to those members of the church who are estranged or indifferent or hostile to the church. It can be considered as missions toward those who are non-Christian within a Christian culture. The paradox inherent in these functions is between verity and adaptation--that is, between the content of the Christian message which is the source of the churches' mission, and adapting or accommodating the Christian message to the categories of understanding in those to whom the mission is directed.

3. Constructing functions are those "in which the church builds its life by using and transcending the functions of man's life under the dimension of the Spirit."³⁴
 This has to do with the use of cultural creations in building the life of the church. The church is always

³²Ibid., III, 193.

³³Ibid., III, 194.

³⁴Ibid., III, 196.

constructing in the aesthetic, cognitive, social and political realms a sector which serves the life of the church.

Two realms may be distinguished under the constructive functions: the realm of "theoria" or theoretical and the realm of "praxis" or practical. The theoretical realm includes the aesthetic and cognitive functions, and the practical includes the communal and personal functions.

The paradox which pervades the constructing functions is a tension between "form-transcendence" and "form-affirmation." From the cultural spheres of life the churches take styles, methods, etc. to express the Spiritual Community. The church, however, is distinguished as the church only if the Spirit invades these finite forms and drives them beyond themselves. This is form-transcending. Form-affirmation has to do with being faithful to the essential form of the cultural realm without violating aesthetic rules. Thus, the church could not violate artistic integrity in the name of a sacred style. On the other hand, the artist must have reverence for the form he uses. The church makes use of the aesthetic function in the area of the religious arts. These are used by the church to express the meaning of its life through artistic symbols. The significance of religious art as a constructing function of the church is recognized in the insight that "expression does something to what it

expresses . . . expression gives life to what it expresses."³⁵ Tillich says that in the area of the aesthetical, two principles control religious art: the principle of consecration, "an application of the larger principle of form-transcendence; and the principle of honesty, "an application of the general principle of form-affirmation."

The cognitive function also comes under the theoretical realm and is concerned with the theological function of the churches. In writing about the cognitive function, Tillich points to the meditative and discursive elements in theology. "The meditative act penetrates the substance of the religious symbols; the discursive act analyzes and describes the form in which the substance can be grasped."³⁶ Tillich does not, however, come to the conclusion that theological discourse is bound to any particular set of symbols. He maintains that it is characterized by openness in all directions.

In the realm of praxis the churches are concerned with the "interdependent growth of community and personality."³⁷ The problem arises as to whether justice and humanity can be preserved if they are employed in the self-construction of the churches. It would seem that the

³⁵ Ibid., III, 198.

³⁶ Ibid., III, 202.

³⁷ Ibid., III, 204.

churches are the places where the ambiguities of communal life can be fought against, and fragmentarily conquered. Tillich gives evidence of this in four different areas. First, communal life in the church is characterized by inclusiveness "in so far as the church claims to be all-inclusive beyond any social, racial or national limitations." Second, equality characterized the churches, in so far as they acknowledge "the equality of all men under sin and of all men under forgiveness." Leadership is a third quality of the churches' life. It must be recognized that religious leadership is as open to demonic possibilities as any other kind of leadership. Tillich lists legal form as a final quality of the churches' life. This seems to be a necessity, for "nothing in human history has reality without a legal form." Tillich says,

No church office is a result of a direct command by the divine Spirit. But the church is, and its functions are, because they belong to its nature. The institution and offices serving the church in these functions are matters of sociological adequacy, practical expediency, and human wisdom.³⁸

The other arm of the function of praxis is concerned with personal functions in the church. These functions include the person's relation to himself and his relation to others. Practically, this deals with personal saintliness and the guidance or determination of others.

³⁸Ibid., III, 207.

A detailed discussion of this area of thought would not yield determinative insights for Tillich's doctrine of the church.

4. Relating functions is the name Tillich applies to the actions which result from the churches' encounters with other sociological groups. It is a function of systematic theology to formulate the ways and principles by which the churches relate to other social groups. Tillich attributes to the churches the priestly, prophetic and royal functions derived from the Christ. In each case, however, there is a mutual interaction between the churches and other groups. For example, there is a silent-interpenetration of "priestly substance" between the churches and other sociological groups. Prophetically speaking, the churches and other groups exercise a critical judgment on one another. Political establishment is the name Tillich gives to the royal function, but in doing so, they must recognize "a justified political impact on the churches from the side of society."³⁹ This is the case because the relation of the churches to other groups has the mark of mutuality. Tillich says the reason for this mutuality is the equality of predicament. The churches find themselves caught up in the ambiguities of life which characterize other groups. The churches,

³⁹ Ibid., III, 215.

however, must have a stance of opposition to society, for "when the church loses its radical otherness, it loses itself and becomes a benevolent social club."⁴⁰ The phrase "the church against the world" must be balanced by the phrase "the church within the world."

To sum up this discussion regarding the church's functions, it should be emphasized that all the functions of the church stem from the nature of the church as the community of faith and love. It should also be noted that these functions are the ways in which the churches carry on a ministry of communication. One way to determine the aliveness and vitality of a church is to observe whether these functions are at work. Tillich says "the functions of the church are of its very nature, and they must always be present where there is a church."⁴¹ Thus, it is evident that the communicative task of the church is accomplished through the various functions which have been described. The churches express themselves as living entities through these functions, and apart from these functions the church has no effective way of communicating the Christian message.

Tillich concludes his systematic consideration of the churches with a section on "The Individual in the Church and the Spiritual Presence." The concern of this

⁴⁰ Ibid., III, 216.

⁴¹ Ibid., III, 188.

part of Tillich's thought has to do with the experience of entering into the church and living one's life in the church.

To enter into the church is to experience conversion. Tillich points out that "conversion is not necessarily a momentary event; it is in most cases a long process which has been going on unconsciously long before it breaks into consciousness, giving the impression of a sudden, unexpected, and overwhelming crisis."⁴² Entering the Spiritual Community is a process which becomes manifest in an ecstatic moment. Tillich suggests that the real structure of conversion is that it has the character of a transition from the latent stage of the Spiritual Community to its manifest stage.

Tillich points out that "everyone who belongs actively to a church is a 'priest' by the fact of his belonging to the Spiritual Community, and he is able to exercise all the functions of a priest."⁴³ This does not exclude a trained ministry, but the trained performance of priestly activities does not give one any higher status in the Spiritual Community.

An attempt has been made to follow Tillich in his study of the church. This is not a simple matter, for the study of any part of Tillich's thought requires some

⁴²Ibid., III, 219.

⁴³Ibid., III, 217.

acquaintance with his system. Only in this perspective can one begin to grasp the breadth of Tillich's view of the church. It is apparent, however, that the church must become increasingly aware of its essential nature in order to fulfill its ministry of communicating the new state of things which has appeared in Jesus as the Christ.

III. COMMUNICATION AS PARTICIPATION

In the preceding section of this chapter, consideration was given to the nature and marks of the church and the functions of the church. There it was pointed out that the church achieves a ministry of communication through various functions. It was also noted that everyone who belongs actively to a church is a priest and is able to exercise priestly functions. Consequently, the ministry of communication is a responsibility of the whole church.

In the light of the common communicating task of theologians, ministers, teachers and parents, Tillich indicates that our real concern is to find the proper language which has communicative power in proclaiming the Christian message. Consider Tillich's understanding of the word "communication." The external meaning of the word as providing information, entertainment or advertising is dismissed by Tillich as being inadequate for transmitting the Christian message. Tillich sees the key to

understanding communication in the idea of participation, or helping others participate in a given reality.⁴⁴ He is not concerned with a method of communication, but in facing the question: "How do we present the Gospel in such a way that others will accept it?" Tillich states this clearly:

True communication of the Gospel means making possible a definite decision for or against it. We who communicate the Gospel must understand the others, we must somehow participate in their existence so that their rejection means partly an ejection, a throwing out in the moment it starts to take root in them. To this point we can bring them, and this is what communicating the Gospel means.⁴⁵

Communication is a matter of participation in the existence of those whom we hope to reach with the Christian message. This kind of participation calls for existential involvement and enables us to discern the questions of human existence to which we are supposed to give the answer. Our answers will be no answers unless they are given in response to questions which arise out of the existential situation. Participation and involvement in the existential situation save us from giving answers to questions which are not being asked. Christian

⁴⁴Paul Tillich, "Communicating the Christian Message Today," (from the transcript of an address given in 1959 under the auspices of the Evanston Institute for Ecumenical Studies).

⁴⁵Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 202.

communication is effective only when it touches the center of human life.

Tillich speaks of non-genuine forms of accepting and rejecting the Gospel, and to overcome this is one of the difficult tasks of communication. In breaking through the non-genuine rejection or acceptance of the Gospel, there are at least three obstacles to overcome. These are remoteness, the enormity of ignorance, and lack of existential participation.⁴⁶ Those who have grown up in a Protestant tradition would have difficulty rejecting Roman Catholicism on a genuine basis simply because Roman Catholicism is remote to most Protestants. Nor can a person genuinely reject Christianity if he is ignorant about the Christian message. Furthermore, there will be non-genuine rejection of the Christian message if that message has never touched a person existentially. This last point is decisive for our understanding of communicating the Gospel.

If the Gospel is to be communicated in our day, we must show its existential significance. What does it mean for the center of a person's life? This is the question, and the task of the Christian church is to show that the Christian message is an answer to the questions implied in

⁴⁶Tillich, "Communicating the Christian Message Today," p. 1.

the very existence of man. One readily recognizes that communicating the Gospel must be seen in relation to Tillich's "method of correlation." It has already been pointed out that this is Tillich's way of uniting the message and the situation. This method "tries to correlate the questions implied in the situation with the answers implied in the message. . . . It correlates questions and answers, situation and message, human existence and divine manifestation."⁴⁷

To show the existential significance of the Christian message requires that we show to those who hear their own human predicament. This predicament is characterized by despair, anxiety and estrangement. Man is estranged from what he truly and essentially is. Tillich points out that our task is to show the structures of anxiety, conflicts and guilt; for these structures effectively mirror what we are. Tillich contends that if these structures are held up before people it will be like holding up a mirror in which people can see themselves.⁴⁸ The assumption is that these elements of finitude in our existence raise questions which are answered by the Christian message. Universally, people participate in human existence,

⁴⁷ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 8.

⁴⁸ Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 204.

and on this basis Tillich asserts that the Christian message is the answer to the questions implied in human existence. One of the real tasks of communication in the Christian sense is to help in the understanding of questions, for it is impossible to understand the answers without understanding the questions which they answer.⁴⁹ Tillich says the answers given will have as many forms as there are questions and situations. However, he points out that

. . . there is one thing perhaps which will be common to all our answers if we answer in terms of the Christian message. The Christian message is the message of a new Reality in which we can participate and which gives us the power to take anxiety and despair upon ourselves.⁵⁰

Tillich contends that nothing less than this must be communicated to the man of today.

In order to communicate the Gospel, however, it is necessary to make the symbols of the Christian message understandable as symbols. A genuine acceptance of the Christian message is impossible as long as Christian symbols have wrong connotations. To remove these wrong connotations, Tillich employs what he terms as "deliteralization." He prefers this to Bultmann's approach in the word "demythologization." Bultmann's term can mean two things.

⁴⁹Tillich, "Communicating the Christian Message Today," p. 4.

⁵⁰Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 208.

It can mean the fight against a literalistic interpretation of symbols and myths. In this meaning, demythologization is a necessary function. But it can also mean the removal of myth as a vehicle of religious expression. Tillich rejects this latter meaning because "it would deprive religion of its language; it would silence the experience of the Holy."⁵¹

Tillich considers the word "deliteralization" as a more adequate term for describing "the fight against the great fallacy that symbol and myth are parts of the same world in which we move daily in time and space." At times, interpretation of the Christian message would require just the opposite of demythologization. What might be needed is to elevate concepts again into their symbolic position. Tillich calls this "symbolization," which means making symbols understandable as symbols and nothing else. When presented with these ideas in mind, the symbols of the Christian message--creation, Kingdom of God, prayer, etc.--do give answers to the questions implied in human existence. These symbols, properly interpreted, will save us from throwing doctrines like stones on the heads of people as answers to questions which they have never asked.

⁵¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 152.

Tillich refers to two kinds of "stumbling blocks" which keep people from making a decision about the Christian message. One is genuine and refers to those who hear the Gospel and genuinely reject it. The other stumbling block has reference to our wrong way of communicating the Christian message, our failure to present the Gospel in such a fashion that people can decide for or against it. Tillich says that "what we have to do is to overcome the wrong stumbling block in order to bring people face to face with the right stumbling block and enable them to make a genuine decision."⁵²

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR A MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

In the communication of the Christian message, the serious problem is the problem of participation. In spite of the difficulties involved, Tillich holds strongly to the idea that communication is impossible without participation. He is very clear at this point:

To communicate the Gospel means putting it before the people so that they are able to decide for or against it. The Christian Gospel is a matter of decision. It is to be accepted or rejected. All that we who communicate this Gospel can do is to make possible a genuine decision. Such decision is one based on understanding and on partial participation.⁵³

⁵²Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 213.

⁵³Ibid., p. 201.

This frame of reference makes it possible to move from the theoretical to the operational level in dealing with Tillich's concepts of communication, and we must ask the question, "What do these concepts mean for various functions of ministry?" Here we will attempt to be faithful to Tillich's observations regarding the functions of ministry as expressed through the life of the church.

The Ministry of Counseling and Pastoral Care

Tillich is well qualified to speak about pastoral care. David Roberts once said that Paul Tillich is perhaps the only great contemporary Protestant theologian who has an extensive first-hand understanding of psychoanalysis.⁵⁴ In expressing his interest in depth psychology, Tillich writes:

The problem of the relation between the theological and the psychotherapeutic understanding of men has come more and more into the foreground of my interest. I do not think that it is possible today to elaborate a Christian doctrine of the Christian man, without using the immense material brought forth by depth psychology.⁵⁵

The extent and depth of Tillich's psychological knowledge is readily apparent in his writings on counseling and

⁵⁴David Roberts, "The Man of the Month," Pastoral Psychology, III:29 (December 1952), 8.

⁵⁵Kegley, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

pastoral care. Tillich's thoughts in this area will be considered under four headings: The Nature of Pastoral Care, The Aim of Pastoral Care, The Resources of Pastoral Care and The Attitude in Pastoral Care.

1. The Nature of Pastoral Care. One of the dangers of pastoral care is the inclination of many people receiving care to think of themselves as objects. This stance can lead to a feeling of humiliation and intensifies resistance to pastoral care. However, this resistance can be reduced when one takes cognizance of two significant factors. The first is the fact that care is universally human. No moment of human existence is so bankrupt that care is not present. A second factor is the mutuality of care. The one who gives care is also the one who receives care.⁵⁶

That care is universally human is seen in the fact that no one can take care of himself in every respect. Tillich says:

We cannot develop healthily unless we find the power of being which we lack in the power of being of others who have it, and whom we can let participate in our power of being.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Paul Tillich, "The Spiritual and Theological Foundations of Pastoral Care," in Clinical Education for the Pastoral Ministry, 5th (1958), 1.

⁵⁷Ibid.

A natural consequence of this is the mutuality of care: we are taken care of if we take care of others.

Tillich makes it clear that pastoral care is not an exclusive function of the experts. In some sense everyone is a healer, a pastor. According to the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, every Christian is a priest for every other Christian. The thing that distinguishes the professionals from others who exercise functions of care is that the professionals exercise these functions consciously, whereas the others do so mostly unconsciously and casually.

In principle every Christian engages in the act of pastoral counseling. However, this possibility is not always actual, and where it is actual there must be a clear distinction of functions. That is to say, in terms of definition, pastoral counseling must be sharply distinguished from helping in all other respects.⁵⁸ The function of the minister is not to be confused with the function of him who helps the body, or the social situation or the psychological disease. Pastoral counseling deals with psychological disturbances in relation to an ultimate concern and not in relation to preliminary concerns, such as social and psychological and bodily health. The

⁵⁸Paul Tillich, "Theology and Counseling," The Journal of Pastoral Care, X:4 (Winter 1956), 193.

difference between the kinds of functions can be seen at this point. Pastoral counseling is done in the light of the eternal.

Pastoral counseling should never be considered a substitute for a physician or social worker or psychoanalyst or any other kind of help. Functionally the minister represents the Church, the community where the New Being is actualized. In representing the Church the minister has a function to perform which is distinguished from the others. The ideal is that every helper helps in the light of the eternal, but this ideal is unobtainable if there is a confusion of the functions.

2. The Aim of Pastoral Care. Our goal in counseling, Tillich asserts, is to help human beings realize their full potential. The real meaning of helping is to give strength to others so that they may overcome the negativities which threaten the fulfillment of human potentialities. It is the concern of pastoral care to help people move toward fulfillment in the dimension of the ultimate or eternal.⁵⁹

The function of counseling, therefore, must necessarily be seen in relation to the human predicament. Man, as created, is good. But man's existence is marked by

⁵⁹ Clinical Education for the Pastoral Ministry,
p. 2.

estrangement; it is distorted and is not characterized by the goodness in which it was created. Man is estranged from what he truly and essentially is. The question is this: "What has counseling to do in this situation?" Tillich brings all this together under three terms: judgment, acceptance and transformation.

Judgment means honestly facing the reality of man's estranged predicament. Acceptance means accepting the other one and oneself in the name of Him who accepts us both. Transformation means participating, together with those with whom we counsel, in the power of the New Reality, which is the reality of love. These three things are the characteristics of counseling in the name of the New Being.⁶⁰

In a real sense, the total aim in pastoral care is "acceptance." Man must accept himself in all his negativities, but this is possible only through a realization that he is accepted in spite of these negativities. Acceptance does not mean mere resignation to the situation. It faces the situation with courage and this gives rise to strength.

All this is clarified in reference to specific examples derived from man's existential predicament. For example, the human predicament is characterized by a feeling of guilt and the threat of despair which is connected with guilt. In relation to guilt the first thing is judgment. The counselee is not helped at all by leniency and

⁶⁰Tillich, "Theology and Counseling," p. 197.

permissiveness on the part of the counselor. No attempt should be made to gloss over the negative. It must be honestly faced.

After judgment, one can then move to acceptance. Tillich points out that acceptance is an acceptance "in spite of," otherwise it doesn't do justice to the actual feeling of guilt. He suggests that

. . . perhaps the most profound work of the counselor is to help the other one to accept himself in the situation of guilt. This cannot be done by suspending judgment, but it can by no means be done at all by continuing and strengthening moral demands. . . . The law condemns and destroys if it is not preceded by forgiveness . . . The deepest guilt feeling always comes from the message of grace, not from the proclamation of the law.⁶¹

Where there is genuine acceptance, which is an act of love, there is also transformation. Transformation happens through acceptance and not through commands. This is so because both the counselor and counselee are accepted by a power beyond themselves and the power of acceptance works through them.

It is, then, the aim of pastoral care to help man accept himself in spite of ambiguity and estrangement. Tillich says that

. . . acceptance of the negative presupposes the power of acceptance which is positive, and to mediate

⁶¹Ibid., p. 198.

this power that makes acceptance possible is the all embracing aim of pastoral care.⁶²

3. The Resources of Pastoral Care. Some reference has already been made to the power which makes acceptance possible, and this is the basic resource in all pastoral care. This power must be at work in the counselor, and it must become effective in the one who is being helped. Of course, this presupposes that he who helps in pastoral care is continuously helped himself. The pastor and the counselee are under the power of something which transcends both of them. Tillich calls this power the new creature or the New Being.⁶³ And the only way a pastoral counselor can be of help is if he is grasped by this power and approaches the counselee in the name of this power.

This points to the fact that the power of the New Being alone makes effective pastoral care possible. It is beyond the personal existence of the counselor. Success in pastoral care is not dependent on one being a great personality or a great minister, for the counselor does not mediate himself but becomes a channel for that power which is greater than himself and the counselee.

⁶²Clinical Education for the Pastoral Ministry,
p. 4.

⁶³Ibid.

It is evident that pastoral care is theological work. Both theology and counseling are functions of the church.⁶⁴ In elaborating on this Tillich says:

Pastoral care helps to develop the questions to which religious symbols are supposed to be the answer. In the acts of pastoral care, the human situation, to which the divine revelation is the answer, is seen most concretely and profoundly. Only in the light of this situation can the religious symbols be understood and interpreted. No theologian should be cut off from this continuous source for his systematic work and no pastoral counselor should miss the occasion to revise his theological thoughts in the light of his counseling experiences.⁶⁵

4. The Attitude in Pastoral Care. Here it is necessary to begin with the realization that the estrangement in which man is involved also characterizes the church. Ambiguity is evident in the church and all its functions. The churches are involved in the predicament of mankind as a whole. That is to say, churches are given to pride, self-elevation, arrogance and a will to power. But at the same time, the churches bring something which has judged and transformed religious culture. This is the ambiguity of the church and all its functions.

It is true of the function of pastoral counseling. Therefore, the basic principle for the attitude of pastoral counseling is mutuality. It is imperative that the

⁶⁴Tillich, "Theology and Counseling," p. 193.

⁶⁵Clinical Education for the Pastoral Ministry, p. 4.

counselor participate in the situation of the person needing care. In expressing this participation the counselor not only uses words of acceptance, but communicates to the counselee the fact that he identifies with the counselee's situation. Tillich says the counselor should never feel he is just the subject having objects whom he counsels. In this context, the act of counseling is a humiliation for the one counseled. Tillich expresses this rather passionately:

But always act--and not only act: feel, in the depths of your own being--as though you participated in an act of communion with those whom you counsel. Tell them sometimes (not always, and not as an external law) that you are in the same predicament as they are. Confess, if you want them to confess. Don't be one-sided in the subject-object relationship into which counseling can easily fall. If this is true of the Church as a whole, if this mutuality is needed with respect to all cultural functions, then it is certainly needed with respect to all individual functions, and especially to the most personal function, which we call counseling.⁶⁶

Tillich indicates that one danger that pastoral counselors should recognize is the tendency of ministers to become "dilettante psychoanalysts."⁶⁷ The minister exercises the pastoral function, and he should never become a little doctor or psychotherapist. While

⁶⁶Tillich, "Theology and Counseling," p. 193.

⁶⁷Paul Tillich, "The Relevance of the Ministry in Our Time and Its Theological Foundation," in Hans Hofmann (ed.), Making The Ministry Relevant (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), p. 25.

overlapping in the healing process is unavoidable, it is necessary to draw a sharp distinction between levels of healing: the medical, the psychotherapeutic and the religious. Tillich writes:

Neither the medical nor the priestly function is bound to its vocational representatives: the minister may be a healer and the psychotherapist a priest, and each human being may be both in relation to the "neighbor." But the functions should not be confused and the representatives should not try to replace each other. The goal of both of them is helping men to reach full self-affirmation, to attain the courage to be.⁶⁸

Tillich makes a case for the correct use of religious language in pastoral care. People who seek counseling can be repelled by words and symbols that no longer hold power or meaning for them. It is essential that the counselor speak in a style that hits people in the place where they live. It is Tillich's view that the problem of communication is one of the greatest and most difficult in present-day religious life, and this is especially true in pastoral counseling.

The Ministry of Education

Earlier in the dissertation the role and significance of the church was discussed. There it was pointed

⁶⁸Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 77-78.

out that the churches express themselves as living entities in a number of functions, one group of which was called "functions of expansion." Included among the expanding functions of the church are missions, evangelism, and education. Here consideration will be given to the educational function. This function, states Tillich, is based on the desire of the churches to continue their life from generation to generation. Tillich says "the problem of religious education has become one of the major issues in the contemporary churches."⁶⁹ In stressing the significance of the religious function of education for systematic theology, Tillich makes clear that the church has been concerned with the educational function from the time the first family was received in it. This is the case because the reception of the first members put before the church the task of receiving each new generation into its fellowship.

In commenting on the educational function, Tillich maintains that the aim is not merely to give out historical information or provide doctrinal instruction. Nor is the function of education for the purpose of bringing one to an emotional type conversion. In discounting these distortions of the educational function, Tillich says more positively that

⁶⁹ Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 194.

The Church's task is to introduce each new generation into the reality of the Spiritual Community, into its faith and into its love. This happens through participation in degrees of maturity, and it happens through interpretation in degrees of understanding. There is no understanding of a church's life without participation; but without understanding the participation becomes mechanical and compulsory.⁷⁰

One confession, among others, which the churches must make is that they have not always succeeded in the educational function. Today, church leaders are distressed at the low investment of time by congregations in educational work. What is more disturbing is the fact that years of attendance in a church school often fails to make any difference in a church member's life orientation.

Tillich has stated that churches are largely responsible for the enormity of ignorance regarding Christianity which is prevalent today.⁷¹ His reason for saying this is because the churches "have offered a picture of Christianity mixed with a large amount of superstition, domineering moralistic elements and, in particular, doctrinal fanatic elements."⁷² While the churches confess frustration in regard to their educational task, they still see the educational function as a basic way of transmitting the religious heritage. Professor Howard

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Tillich, "Communicating the Christian Message Today," pp. 1-2.

⁷²Ibid.

Clinebell has indicated that over forty-four million children, youth and adults are currently participating in 287,642 Sunday Schools and other religious education programs. Engaged as teachers in these programs are over three and one-half million persons.⁷³ The real question is whether all this activity is actually helping to introduce people into the reality of the church. Commenting on this, Dr. Clinebell says,

During a child's most impressionable years, his "church" is actually the Sunday School classes to which he belongs. If they are dull, then his earliest and deepest feelings about the church will be those of dullness. If these classes open windows of adventure, then his first associations will be one of lift and excitement.⁷⁴

In light of the present situation in religious education, what insights are to be found in Tillich for an effective ministry of education? Tillich distinguishes three educational aims--the technical education, the humanistic education and the inducting education.⁷⁵ Technical education is concerned with education for various skills, such as using tools in a skillful manner. Humanistic education has to do with the development of human potentialities, individually and socially. It is

⁷³Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Mental Health Through Christian Community (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 124.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 124-215.

⁷⁵Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 146.

primarily concerned with helping man actualize or fulfill his potentialities. In contrast to humanistic, there is inducting education which is designed to induct individuals into the actuality of a group, community, family, church or any number of other groups.

The way this happens is through the participation of the individual in the life of the group. However, it can also be brought about by interpreting to the individual the meaning of the symbols and institutions of the group in which he lives.

Tillich makes the observation that the church school has been predominantly identified with the inducting type of education.⁷⁶ In the Middle Ages this induction was seen as an initiation into the mystery of human existence. It was induction into a community whose symbols provided answers to the questions of human existence. In a sense, it represented the spirit of society as a whole, for the religious element in society largely determined the spirit of education. Today, however, the induction takes the shape of being initiated into special denominational or confessional groups, with concentration on the group's own traditions and symbols. The result, quite often, is a state of isolation from all the sectors of contemporary life.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 148.

One consequence of induction into a particular denomination is that an individual will experience doubt and skepticism regarding traditional symbols when he comes into contact with a world where these symbols have little meaning. In fact, his response may take the form of an attack upon the symbols into which he had been inducted. Or, he may simply reject and turn away from the symbols. This trend or pattern certainly needs no documentation in college and university communities and among the increasing number of young adults in our society. In an age characterized by mobility, many who previously gave some place to religion in their lives, simply are not anxious to become involved in a religious community when moving to a new area. They feel a sense of freedom in being liberated from the necessity of giving attention to the traditions and symbols of a church.

Religious induction, asserts Tillich, is confronted with two main difficulties:

. . . one is the fact that it has to give answers to questions which have never been asked by the child. In speaking of God and the Christ and the Church, or of sin and salvation and the kingdom of God, religious education mediates a material which cannot be received by the mind of those who have not asked the questions to which these words give answers. These words are like stones, thrown at them, from which sooner or later they must turn away.⁷⁷

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 154.

It is clear that the task of the religious educator is to find the existentially important questions in the minds of his pupils, and then to show that the Christian message gives answers to those questions. On the part of the religious educator, this calls for genuine participation in the lives of his pupils. Another principle to follow in the religious education of children is to find ways of shaping their existence in the direction of questions that have universal significance. In this way children come to ask those questions which are answered in the Christian message. At one point Tillich says:

It is impossible to understand the answers without understanding the questions which they answer. That has happened an infinite number of times in the communication of the churches. They give the doctrinal answers but they don't know that these are the answers to the real questions of human existence.⁷⁸

Seward Hiltner gives clarification to this point when he writes:

The general aim of our program of religious education for children and youth is so to introduce each child at varying ages and stages of development, to the Christian faith that it takes hold inwardly upon him--and in turn emerges as the vital basis of his attitude toward life as a whole. . . . We believe our religion gives the basic answers to the ultimately serious questions of life, and that in so far as any child at any stage is able to ask questions seriously, we attempt to help him see the relevance of the

⁷⁸Tillich, "Communicating the Christian Message Today," p. 4.

Christian answer to his own question as he is then able to understand both.⁷⁹

A second problem which confronts religious induction relates to the symbolic character of religious language. Tillich says that the great art of the religious educator is to make the symbols of the Christian faith understandable as symbols. That is to say, his task is to transform literalistic interpretations of religious symbols into understandable concepts without destroying the power of the symbols. Tillich describes two reactions to this demanding assignment.⁸⁰ One alternative is simply a refusal to help pupils through the process of transformation, so that the religious symbols come to have meaning for their lives. Another possibility is to refuse to teach the traditional symbols until such time as the pupil is old enough to understand. Both approaches are wrong, Tillich declares. It is essential to impress religious symbols on the receptive minds of young children, for no one is in a position to say exactly how much a child is influenced by the ritual acts of the church. An exposure of the child to the symbols of faith can be decisively important in opening his life to the ultimate mystery of being.

⁷⁹Seward Hiltner, "Parents and the Church School," Pastoral Psychology, III:27 (October 1952), 19.

⁸⁰Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 155.

The religious educator must see his task in terms of overcoming literalism without destroying the power of the symbols. This means, for one thing, that he has the task of removing wrong connotations from the symbols of the Christian message. Reference has already been made to Tillich's ideas regarding "deliteralization." This is his way of showing that "symbols are symbols and not stories which could be reported by a Time photographer and reporter."⁸¹ The symbols of the Christian faith can be understandable for our time if these symbols are understood as symbols and not as literalistic statements. As Tillich has declared, "it is tragic when religious symbols are drawn down to the level of reality where we look at subjects and things as mere objects."⁸²

The Ministry of Preaching

1. Importance of Preaching. It must be said forthrightly that Tillich assigns special importance to preaching. He has gone so far as to say that preaching is ultimately more important than theology.⁸³ In his

⁸¹Tillich, "Communicating the Christian Message Today," p. 3.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³D. Mackenzie Brown, Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 40.

"Autobiographical Reflections" Tillich communicates a feeling of excitement regarding preaching:

Looking back at more than forty years of public speaking, I must confess that from the first to the last address this activity has given me the greatest anxiety and the greatest happiness. I have always walked up to a desk or pulpit with fear and trembling, but the contact with the audience gives me a pervasive sense of joy, the joy of a creative communion, of giving and taking, even if the audience is not vocal.⁸⁴

Another indication that preaching is significant in the thinking of Tillich is the fact that he has published three widely-read and often-quoted volumes of sermons: The Shaking of The Foundations, The New Being and The Eternal Now.

Behind Tillich's interest in preaching is a strong feeling that the Christian Gospel can be communicated to the man of today. To be effective, however, this communication must show the significance of the Gospel for the center of human life. This will not be accomplished by throwing "the truth like stones at the heads of people, not caring whether they can accept it or not."⁸⁵ Nor will the task be accomplished by trying to "advertise Jesus, as some churches do, like one advertises a new brand of

⁸⁴Kegley, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

⁸⁵Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 186.

toothpaste."⁸⁶ The communication of the Gospel will intersect the life of man where he lives, and will show that the Christian message is an answer to the questions implied in human existence. Tillich's preaching reflects the utter seriousness with which he takes the questions and perplexities of modern man. He is concerned to meet people in the reality of their situation and thought, and this contributes to Tillich's zeal for communication. Tillich's preaching substantiates his contention that communication is a matter of participation--participating in the existence of others. It is Tillich's view that

Something has happened in our time, which has opened up many people in such a way that they ask the question to which we can give the answer. In following this method, we follow the lead of the Beatitudes. There Jesus always points to the situation in which people are and in which they ask for the Kingdom of God. It is then that they can understand the answer, and hence are blest.⁸⁷

Preaching serves to open up a man's mind and his whole being so that he asks the question about the ultimate meaning of life. It cuts through the complacency of those who assume they have all the right answers and compels them to face the conflicts in their own existence--the anxiety, longings and despair. It is Tillich's concern with the human predicament that gives relevance and a

⁸⁶Tillich, "Communicating the Christian Message Today," p. 1.

⁸⁷Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 207.

sense of immediacy to his preaching. Against this background, consideration will now be given to Tillich's style of communicating the Gospel.

2. Theology and Preaching. Tillich is not only a theologian who carefully explores the intricacies of man's relationship to God; he possesses the ability to put theology in sermonic form so that it touches the center of human life. Tillich is at his best in delineating traditional religious concepts and presenting them in such a way that the hearers are compelled to make a decision for or against the Christian Gospel.

Consider specific examples of how Tillich takes theological concepts and presents them in sermonic form as powerful symbols to answer man's deepest questions.

(a) Take, for example, Tillich's idea of God and man's ultimate concern.

After stating that the basic theological question is the question of God, Tillich says that God is the answer to the question implied in man's finitude; he is the name for that which concerns man ultimately. The meaning of this is that whatever concerns a man ultimately becomes god for him, and the object of a man's ultimate concern has to be god for him. Tillich's assertion that God is that which unconditionally or ultimately concerns us is derived from the commandment, "You shall love the

Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deut. 6:5)

The following paragraph gives a summary of Tillich's view of God:

The being of God is being-itself. The being of God cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside others or above others. If God is a being, he is subject to the categories of finitude, especially to space and substance. Even if he is called the "highest being" in the sense of the "most perfect" and the "most powerful" being, this situation is not changed. When applied to God, superlatives become diminutives. They place him on the level of other beings while elevating him above all of them . . . Whenever infinite or unconditional power and meaning are attributed to the highest being, it has ceased to be a being and has become being-itself. Many confusions in the doctrine of God could be avoided if God were understood first of all as being-itself or as the ground of being. The power of being is another way of expressing the same thing in a circumscribing phrase. . . . It is possible to say that God is the power of being in everything and above everything, the infinite power of being.⁸⁸

In a sermon entitled "The Depth of Existence," Tillich speaks concerning the ground of our being. He says

. . . the name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God. That depth is what the word God means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation . . . He who knows about depth knows about God.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 235-236.

⁸⁹ Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 57.

The ground of being or being-itself has reference to the fact that God is the ground of being for everything which exists. He is the power of being in everything that exists. It is this power of being in man which enables man to have "the courage to be" and to take anxiety upon himself.

Tillich has stated that "faith is the state of being ultimately concerned: the dynamics of faith are the dynamics of man's ultimate concern."⁹⁰ Religion is an ultimate concern about the meaning of one's life and the meaning of being. In a seminar at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Tillich explained ultimate concern "as taking something with ultimate seriousness, unconditional seriousness."⁹¹ He says that the person who claims to have no ultimate concern should be asked "Is there really nothing at all that you take with unconditional seriousness?" If you ask what you are willing to suffer and die for, you discover what you take with ultimate seriousness. It is possible for the content of one's ultimate concern to be unworthy, but no one can escape taking some concern with ultimate seriousness. Idolatry is present when we take that which is finite and

⁹⁰Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 1.

⁹¹Brown, op. cit., p. 7.

preliminary and worship it as ultimate. This is the idolizing and demonic danger of religion.

Tillich has a sermon entitled "Ultimate Concern," which is based on the story of Mary and Martha and their response to Jesus.⁹² Mary and Martha symbolize two kinds of concern. All of the things about which Martha is concerned are finite, preliminary, transitory. On the other hand, Mary is concerned about one thing which is infinite, ultimate, lasting. In this sermon Tillich points to many concerns in life which demand our attention, but we are not to give these concerns our ultimate devotion.

. . . we maintain our preliminary concerns as if they were ultimate. And they keep us in their grasp if we try to free ourselves from them. Every concern is tyrannical and wants our whole heart and our whole mind and our whole strength. Every concern tries to become our ultimate concern, our god.

Tillich concludes the sermon by saying that "the one thing needed is to be concerned ultimately, unconditionally, infinitely. Mary was infinitely concerned. This is the one thing needed." We can look at all our finite concerns in the light of this ultimate concern.

(b) Consider Tillich's interpretation of justification by grace through faith.

For Tillich justification is the heart and center of salvation.

⁹²Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 152.

Justification in the objective sense is the eternal act of God by which he accepts as not estranged those who are indeed estranged from him by guilt and the act by which he takes them into the unity with him which is manifest in the New Being in Christ. Justification literally means "making just," namely, making man that which he essentially is and from which he is estranged . . . It is an act of God which is in no way dependent on man, an act in which he accepts him who is unacceptable . . . Indeed, there is nothing in man which enables God to accept him. But man must accept just this. He must accept that he is accepted; he must accept acceptance.⁹³

Tillich says the term "justification by faith" is misleading. It gives the impression that faith is an act of man by which he merits justification. "The cause is God alone (by grace), but the faith that one is accepted is the channel through which grace is mediated to man (through faith)." It is not faith but grace which is the cause of God's justifying act. "Faith is the receiving act, and this act is itself a gift of grace." The term "justification" is not rejected by Tillich, but he feels it should be replaced in the practice of teaching and preaching by the term "acceptance." This points to our acceptance by God in spite of our unacceptability, and we are asked to accept this acceptance.

The idea of acceptance is put into one of Tillich's most widely quoted sermons, "You Are Accepted."⁹⁴

⁹³Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, 178-179.

⁹⁴Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 153.

The text for the sermon is Romans 5:20, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." This sermon grew out of Tillich's reflection on what he considered the two all-determining facts of our life: the abounding of sin and the greater abounding of grace. Sin is defined as separation, the power of estrangement from our true being. "In grace something is overcome; grace occurs in spite of separation and estrangement. Grace is the reunion of life with life, the reconciliation of the self with itself. Grace is the acceptance of that which is rejected." Our whole life is marked by estrangement from others and ourselves, because we are separated from the Ground of our Being.

Paul affirms that grace abounds much more than sin. He said this because he had experienced acceptance in spite of his being rejected. And when the fact that he was accepted dawned on Paul, he could accept himself and be reconciled to others. He was struck by grace and reunited with that to which he belonged. This can happen to us and transform our lives. Sometimes this grace breaks in upon us as though a voice were saying, "You are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you . . . Simply accept the fact that you are accepted." If this happens to us we have experienced grace.

In another sermon "To Whom Much is Forgiven"⁹⁵

Tillich writes,

He who is accepted ultimately can also accept himself. Being forgiven and being able to accept oneself are one and the same thing. No one can accept himself who does not feel that he is accepted by the power of acceptance which is greater than his friends and counselors and psychological helpers.

Tillich says that "nothing greater can happen to a human being than that he is forgiven. For forgiveness means reconciliation in spite of hostility; it means acceptance of those who are unacceptable, and it means reception of those who are rejected."

These illustrations demonstrate Tillich's skill in helping the hearers experience the power of the symbols of the Christian message. He speaks to the core of human life and does not pass lightly over the doubt and despair which are a part of life. His preaching is surprisingly evangelical and seeks to relate man to God.

3. Tillich's Method and Approach to Preaching.

Tillich uses the Bible as the basis of his preaching. A survey of his published sermons reveals only two or three topical sermons. In The Shaking of the Foundations there is a topical sermon entitled "Meditation: The Mystery of Time," and in The New Being there is a topical sermon on

⁹⁵ Paul Tillich, The New Being (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 3.

the theme "Faith and Uncertainty." Almost all of Tillich's sermons grow out of a biblical passage. Most of the sermons are textual, but there are a few examples of expository preaching. Tillich's sermon "We Live in Two Orders" (Shaking of the Foundations) is an exposition of Isaiah 40. After setting this chapter in the proper historical context, Tillich relates it to the Christian faith and applies it to our modern situation. Tillich also gives an exposition of Psalm 139 in a sermon entitled "Escape From God" (Shaking of the Foundations). In The New Being there is an expository sermon entitled "To Whom Much is Forgiven," in which Tillich gives an illuminating presentation on the subjects of righteousness, forgiveness and love. These themes grow out of the passage in Luke 7: 36-37.

There are other expository sermons, but most of Tillich's sermons could be classified as textual. If any of Tillich's sermons are referred to as topical they certainly must be called "biblically topical." Tillich's concern is that biblical truth be communicated and that his listeners become involved in the biblical message. A good example of Tillich's method of using a text is the sermon "God's Pursuit of Man" in The Eternal Now.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), pp. 101-111.

Basing his thoughts on Matthew 26:56, "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled," Tillich points out that the very recording of this incident shows that the disciples did not hide their flight. They had learned from Jesus to accept judgment. The followers of Jesus today also flee from his presence. Tillich then indicates how man makes his flight from God.

If the ultimate cuts into the life of a man, he tries to take cover in the preliminary. He runs for a safe place, fleeing from the attack of that which strikes him with unconditional seriousness. And there are many places that look as safe to us as Galilee looked to the fleeing disciples.

Tillich concludes the sermon by saying that no matter how we try to flee from God, we can be arrested. This is

. . . as painful as being wounded by a knife. But it is also great, because it opens up in us a new dimension of life. God has arrested us and something new takes hold of us . . . Therefore, don't flee! Let yourself be arrested and be blessed.

One of the qualities evident in Tillich's sermons is his acquaintance with other disciplines. He makes use of the finest scholarship from every field to give form and substance to his message. This is not to suggest that he quotes extensively. In fact, one searches in vain for long quotations. Tillich's preaching also shows a noticeable lack of illustrations. Occasionally, brief biblical illustrations are used. In the Shaking of the Foundations there is only one life-situation illustration which is developed in detail. It is found in the sermon

"Born in the Grave," and is a vehicle for the communication of the message.⁹⁷ In The New Being there is one sermon entitled "The Power of Love" in which a life-situation illustration is the substance of the message.⁹⁸

Tillich's sermon topics are provocative and yet simple. In most every instance the topic is the theme around which the message is developed. The topic seems to be a miniature of the message. In Tillich's preaching, the thought and not the structure is the important feature. Organization is present, but it is not a factor of extreme importance. The thoughts, the ideas, the intellect and spirit of the preacher--these are the significant factors in Tillich's preaching.

Most of Tillich's published sermons were delivered in university and college chapels. In the preface to The Shaking of the Foundations, Tillich writes,

A large part of the congregation at the Sunday services came from outside the Christian circle in the most radical sense of the phrase. For them, a sermon in traditional biblical terms would have had no meaning. Therefore, I was obliged to seek a language which expresses in other terms the human experience to which the biblical and ecclesiastical terminology point. In this situation, an "apologetic" type of sermon has been developed.⁹⁹

⁹⁷Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 165.

⁹⁸Tillich, The New Being, p. 27.

⁹⁹Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations, preface.

Tillich's aim in preaching is to show that the Christian message is relevant for our time if it uses the language of our time.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this dissertation was to make an inquiry into some of Tillich's concepts regarding communication and to examine the way in which he used these concepts at the operational level. As a reference point for the entire study, the Introductory Chapter was concerned with Tillich's method of correlation. A grasp of any segment of Tillich's theology requires an understanding of this method or principle.

Since language is the fundamental expression of man's spirit, Chapter II was devoted to Tillich's understanding of language in the whole process of communication. Consideration was given to religious language and Tillich's understanding of the Word of God. Any study of communication from Tillich's perspective would necessarily include a discussion of symbolism. This is the case because, in Tillich's view, the only way to adequately express faith or ultimate concern is through symbolic language. Therefore, Chapter III looked at symbolism as the language of faith. Tillich's interest in communication through the arts grows out of his deeper concern with the whole relation between religion and culture.

Tillich is convinced of the utter impossibility of religious expression apart from the forms provided by culture. Hence, Chapter IV dealt with communication through the arts.

In Chapter V several aspects of Christian communication were included under the heading "Toward a Ministry of Communication." The role of the church in communicating the Gospel was explored. This was necessary because, in Tillich's view, the church has the task of asking and answering the questions implied in man's existence. Tillich defines communication in terms of participation in the existence of man. The functions of counseling, education and preaching were examined from this perspective. The dissertation concluded with a consideration of Tillich's style of preaching.

II. FINDINGS

The writer makes no claim to have comprehended all of Tillich's ideas on communication. However, a thorough study of those ideas provides the basis for reporting the following findings and conclusions:

1. Tillich, in expressing his ideas on communication, implies that the church is not set over against the world. When Tillich speaks of the intensive universality of the church, he sees the church participating in everything created under all dimensions of life. The church is

not to become a segment of life, but is to participate in life universal. This implies that the church is open to the future. Tillich says:

There is nothing in nature, nothing in man, and nothing in history which does not have a place in the Spiritual Community and, therefore, in the churches of which the Spiritual Community is the dynamic essence.¹

Writing in the Christian Advocate, Celestin D. Weisser, a Roman Catholic, states that Tillich is not afraid of the world. He sees it as the situation in which the Son of God became incarnate and as the situation in which His good news of salvation must be proclaimed today. "Tillich has reminded us that Christians by the fact of their Christianity have not been set over against the world."²

Harvey Cox takes this even further in addressing the American Association of Theological Schools in June 1966. He points out that the assumed dialogue between the church and the world is a misleading model for thinking about the church's mission in the modern world. Cox asserts:

The emphasis I prefer is on the solidarity of both church and world in judgment and redemption. The real dialogue thus becomes a world dialogue in which the

¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), III, 170.

²Celestin D. Weisser, "Paul Tillich: A Roman Catholic Appreciation," Christian Advocate, XI:3 (February 10, 1966), 8.

church participates . . . The church is a part of the world.³

Cox goes on to say that

The church is that part of the world where an element of serving and celebrating in the light of God's humanizing purposes in the works disclosed in Jesus Christ comes to visibility and consciousness. This means that the dialogue is not between the church and world but among men and about those decisions, large and small, through which man assumes responsibility for the humanization of his world.⁴

Tillich helps us appreciate what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls "the worldliness of Christianity."⁵ The world is the arena where human life is lived and celebrated, and in this situation a worldly church is essential.

It follows naturally, then, that Tillich would work for removing the sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular. The religious and the secular are not separated realms, but are to be seen within each other. This means, of course, that the church must take seriously secular cultural forms as vehicles for the expression of the Christian message. Religion and culture belong together. As Samuel H. Miller has declared:

³Harvey Cox, "The Significance of the Church-World Dialogue for Theological Education," Theological Education, III:2 (Winter 1967), 270.

⁴Ibid., p. 272.

⁵Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers From Prison (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 225.

In a sense, I wish that churches would ban all talk of religion. If they would talk about art, if they would talk about industry, if they would talk about everything else, if they would somehow recognize that the vitality of religion becomes meaningful only when religion is rooted in the non-religious. Only at this juncture of life where the sanctity in the church is sustained not by its own concerns but by the secular. It is the world that may at last save the church, if we will allow it.⁶

2. In light of Tillich's definition of communication as participation, we see the tasks of ministry in terms of engagement. This rests upon the presupposition that God is active in the world and confronts us with the need to respond to His action. This kind of thinking is becoming increasingly evident in the writings of certain Christian education theorists. David Hunter, for example, points out that in our teaching we have a tendency to prepare people for the future rather than ministering to them where they are now.⁷ Hunter sees the educational task in terms of creating the conditions for engagement to take place. He says that "engagement is the moment when God acts in or upon the life of an individual and the individual faces the obligation to respond."⁸ If this is

⁶Samuel H. Miller, "A Philosophy of Theological Education," Encounter, XXV:2 (Summer 1964), 323.

⁷David R. Hunter, Christian Education as Engagement (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 11.

⁸Ibid., p. 7.

taken seriously, many of our approaches to education and preaching will need radical reshaping.

The inclination toward detachment in our teaching is incompatible with the affirmation that God is active in the world at the present moment. The detached, uninvolved attitude which has characterized much of our Christian education makes communication virtually impossible. Without involvement and participation there is no communication. The task of Christian education is not primarily a preparation for the future; its main function is to create the conditions where an encounter with God can take place now.

According to Tillich, this is best achieved by finding those questions which are alive in the minds of people, and demonstrating that the Christian message gives answers to those questions. He says that "our answers must have as many forms as there are questions, and situations, individual and social."⁹ Our task as communicators is to relate the Christian message to concrete and specific questions of existence. This approach immediately rules out the attitude of detachment in Christian education, and calls for existential involvement and participation in the lives of people. Only as we meet and

⁹Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 207.

accept people where they are can we confront them with the claims of God upon their lives.

What has been said about education could be stated just as forcefully in regard to preaching. One professor of preaching was bold to say that the "level of preaching today is somewhere between miserable and wretched."¹⁰ One reason for this state of wretchedness in preaching is its detachment from this real world. There is a noticeable lack of participation. Colin Williams brings to our attention a report from a group of East German Christians:

Pure preaching does not occur when we limit ourselves to the recitation of biblical formulae and the presentation of dogmatically correct teachings . . . True proclamation of the Gospel exists only where the proclaimer ceases to consider himself exclusively as the giver and begins to seek Christ in communion and living encounter with his fellow men.¹¹

In other words, there must be participation for preaching to be truly effective. Seward Hiltner has enunciated this principle in writing about communication. He points out that communication must make significant contact with the frame of reference of the person or group

¹⁰K. Morgan Edwards, (paper read to the faculty of the School of Theology at Claremont, California, January 17, 1966).

¹¹Quoted in Colin W. Williams, Where in the World? (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., 1963), p. 98.

being addressed or it will be rejected or misunderstood.¹² What is called for is preaching that takes seriously the situation of man and which, in some sense, is born out of involvement with man's existence. Involved here is the challenge to a life of dialogue, what Martin Buber calls "seeing the other" or "experiencing the other side."¹³ This dialogue has the nature of participation and is the basis for genuine communication.

Reuel Howe expands this theme in calling on the church to speak dialogically with the world. Howe points out that:

The Church sometimes withdraws from the world, refuses to communicate with it, and treats it as an enemy rather than the place of its life and mission. An all too prevailing attitude among church people is that the church has much to say to the world but that the world has nothing to say that the Church should hear. When the Church is preoccupied with its own concerns and oblivious to the world, its communication becomes monological and not equal to the task of telling men the Good News.¹⁴

The implications for preaching are clear. Preaching must be dialogical, in which the meanings of the preacher and the meanings of the laity meet. Without such dialogue communication cannot take place. Reuel Howe

¹²Seward Hiltner, Preface to Pastoral Theology (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 193.

¹³Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 7.

¹⁴Reuel L. Howe, The Miracle of Dialogue (New York: Seabury Press, 1964), p. 14.

suggests that the trouble with many sermons is that they are not dialogical; the preacher thinks theologically about theology, when what he needs to do is think theologically about life.¹⁵

The whole matter of communication as participation calls for the church to live the life of a servant. The church takes the form of men. J. C. Hoekendijk says there are three directional words for the church: self-emptying, service, solidarity with the people.¹⁶ Hoekendijk goes on to say that the church is found where people are giving themselves unreservedly in total service, "where the solidarity with the fellowman is not merely preached but is actually demonstrated."¹⁷

Tillich's definition of communication as participation also has implications for the emerging forms of ministry in our urban culture. For example, the idea of existential involvement is apparent in the new ministries which have been launched by the Glide Foundation in San Francisco. The Reverend Lewis Durham, Glide's executive

¹⁵Reuel L. Howe, "The Recovery of Dialogue in Preaching," Pastoral Psychology, XII:117 (October 1961), 11.

¹⁶J. C. Hoekendijk, The Church Inside Out (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 71.

¹⁷Ibid.

director, reflects this in stating certain principles or guidelines for a mission to the city.¹⁸

First, there is the process of penetration. We need to learn how to move into society and become involved with people. This requires physical presence--the necessity to go where people are and be where the action is taking place. Secondly, the church can have a bridging function in the city. The church can function to restore communication between groups which are set against each other. Thirdly, the church has a mobilizing function, rallying people around issues which arise in the community and which are defined by the community. Lastly, the church has an authenticating or affirming function. The church can affirm people in their existence and give endorsement to their humanity. This does not require any special kind of religious language. What it does call for is participation in existence, involvement with life as it actually exists. This is how communication takes place and this is how man is confronted with the Christian Gospel.

The church does not exist for itself, but for the world. As the church takes the form of a servant, it will find ways to develop appropriate responses of ministry in

¹⁸Lewis E. Durham. At an informal talk in San Francisco, to students from the School of Theology at Claremont, California, April 14, 1966.

social situations. The crucial issue is whether the church is willing to lay down its life for the sake of humanity. In its servant role, the church can accept the world as the arena where God is working out His purposes. When the church is delivered from bondage to its own life, it finds the freedom to develop whatever forms or structures are necessary to communicate the Christian message in meaningful ways.

3. Another finding which emerges from this study is that the arts need to become a more significant element in the communication of the Gospel. The arts provide the church with a medium of enacting its message in dramatic ways. Tillich is right in pointing to the opening and revealing power that art can have.¹⁹ The arts open up a dimension of reality which is otherwise hidden, and they open up our own being for receiving this reality. This is something we need to rediscover in making the traditional Christian symbols understandable and meaningful for our time. As Dr. F. Thomas Trotter has written:

The religion and arts movement is an attempt to recover the uses of the imagination in religion. In one sense of the term, the "death of God" theology is but an expression of the contemporary crisis in religious imagination. As Buber once noted, man is no longer able to imagine God, or to represent God

¹⁹Paul Tillich, "Address on the Occasion of the Opening of the New Galleries and Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art" in Criterion, III:3 (Summer, 1964), 39.

imaginatively in symbols. The problem for modern churchmen is simply this: how are we to speak meaningfully of reality outside our immediate sensation? The artist is our nearest ally in today's most basic, demanding hermeneutical task.²⁰

To cite an illustration of the possibility of communication through the arts, consider the film. The film is the art form of the twentieth century and provides a distinctive way of exploring and illuminating human experience. As an art form, the film holds the possibility of revealing the human situation in such a way as to raise ultimate questions about life--questions which can be answered by the Christian message. The film has the potential of speaking to all men for, as Tillich says, all men participate in existence which is marked by anxiety, estrangement and loneliness.²¹ The film can communicate to man an understanding of his own predicament, and mirror the structures of anxiety, conflict and guilt operative in his own life. If the film helps one to be aware of the meaning of his existence, the church might possibly have an opportunity to show such a one that his questions are answered in the symbols of the Christian faith. The film provides us with a unique medium for helping to clear away some of the stumbling blocks that

²⁰F. Thomas Trotter, "Religion and the Arts," Christian Advocate, XI:5, (March 10, 1966), 9.

²¹Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 202.

have made it impossible for many people to make a genuine decision about the Christian faith. As the language of our time, the film can be tremendously useful in the communicative task of the church.

We can thank the arts for expressing man's realistic condition and voicing the questions that lie beneath the surface of men's lives. The task of the church is to convey to man that his questions are answered in Jesus as the Christ, the One who brings a new state of things.

4. One important dimension--a dimension which is often overlooked--is the significance Tillich gives to practical theology. Tillich contends that practical theology is the application of historical and systematic theology to the life of the church. Commenting on this Tillich says:

Practical theology can become a bridge between the Christian message and the human situation, generally and specifically. It can put new questions before the systematic theologian, questions arising out of the cultural life of the period, and it can induce the historical theologian to make new researches from points of view which come out of the actual needs of his contemporaries. It can preserve the church from traditionalism and dogmatism, and it can induce society to take the church seriously.²²

In writing about practical theology Tillich has reference to what we now call pastoral theology. Tillich

²²Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 33-34.

has stated that one's very existence is at stake in religious truth.

The question is: to be or not to be. Religious truth is existential truth; to this extent it cannot be separated from practice. Religious truth is acted, as the Gospel of John says.²³

This seems to indicate that pastoral theology is rooted not only in revelation, but in the arena of human experience. Pastoral theology must do two things: to qualify theologically it must be as profound as revelation itself. Secondly, it must face the modern world with honesty, penetration and discriminating judgment. This is what is required if the Christian message is to be effectively communicated to contemporary man.

This is essentially the point being made by theologians who are concerned with church renewal. Allen J. Moore says:

As a theologian of the church, I am faced with the task of understanding the changing social structures and using the resources of the theological and sociological disciplines in order to formulate new and more relevant patterns of life and ministry for the church . . . I believe that theology can arise out of the meeting of biblical and systematic theology and social and cultural studies. In reflecting upon the intersection of these two branches of knowledge, new and clarified theological insights can arise and new understandings as to the process by which the church

²³ Paul Tillich, On the Boundary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), p. 31.

can be more truly the Body of Christ, both in being and in acting, will develop.²⁴

In Seward Hiltner's definition of pastoral theology we see a reliance on Tillichian ideas. Hiltner sees pastoral theology as an operation-centered or function-centered branch of theology which begins with theological questions and concludes with theological answers.²⁵ This suggests that communication of the Christian message is possible only as we reflect seriously upon the relationship of God and man under the changing conditions of human existence and experience. Those who would develop effective patterns of ministry must have a clear theological understanding of the life of the church and the nature of ministry. At the same time, an effective ministry calls for a sensitivity to the nature of man and his current experience. The challenge is to know what is in man and what man is in--the nature of man and his social situation. Only as the Word and the world set the agenda for the church can fresh forms of ministry be developed to help man experience God in the midst of life. Harvey Cox puts this in focus by asserting that "theology takes place

²⁴Allen J. Moore, Jr., "Renewal as Theology and Reflection," (a paper read to the faculty of the School of Theology at Claremont, California, October 18, 1965), pp. 3-4.

²⁵Hiltner, op. cit., p. 24.

where men deal with the concerns of the present in the light of God's action in the past and in the hope both of these generate for the future."²⁶

The symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to the questions of human existence. It is the task of communication to make these symbols understandable to contemporary man, so that the man of today can decide for or against the Christian Gospel. This kind of communication is possible only as we participate in the existence of those whom we hope to reach with the Gospel. The key word is participation; without this there is no communication. Tillich declares, "We can speak to people only if we participate in their concern, not by condescension, but by sharing in it."²⁷ As we participate in human existence we become increasingly aware of where God is and what God is doing. For God dwells with men.

²⁶Cox, op. cit., p. 272.

²⁷Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 207.

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